

Openings: Poetry is any expression of graceful living. An action that appears effortless, a tool that fits your hand perfectly, and an idea that is perfectly sublime are all poetic. Each of us has our unique poetic expression and it is when we are practising our poetry that we make a difference in our world.

Spotlight: There is a general lack of satisfaction with business today. Studies show that most employees would rather not show up at their job Monday morning. Customers continue to report that the quality of products and services are not acceptable. Communities are in court demanding that corporations be responsible for their past and future actions. Stockholders, particularly those of companies like Enron, are anything but pleased. This phenomenon is interesting because each business has the means to ensure complete stakeholder satisfaction. The adage "under promise and over deliver" is based in this realisation. The task is to understand what satisfaction is and how to ensure that you are keeping your stakeholders satisfied.

Satisfaction is a measure of your enterprise's vitality and short-term health. With every interaction and transaction, your stakeholders compare their expectations with the provided outcome. If their expectations are met or exceeded, your stakeholders are satisfied and your business gains while if their expectations are not met, your stakeholders are dissatisfied and your business declines. You create your stakeholders' expectations through what you promise and as long as you can deliver on your promises, there is no problem. If there is a problem, you have either over promised or under delivered.

While knowing what you are capable of delivering is usually a straightforward exercise, knowing what you are promising is not always that easy. To understand what you promise your stakeholders, investigate the explicit and implied conditions that accompany your interactions and transactions. Often, the implied conditions are problematic. In a competitive environment, attracting stakeholders requires that you provide an offering that is at least as attractive as your competition. Conditions usually remain implied because of a belief that stating them explicitly makes your offering less attractive. While this may be true, the cost of addressing the results of implied conditions usually exceed the profit generated.

There is nothing wrong with stretching to do more than you have done before. There need only be the willingness to do what is required to deliver on your promises. Through being truthful to the intention of your enterprise, you know what you can promise and be reasonably certain of delivering on. Adhering to your truth is the only way to ensure stakeholder satisfaction and grow your business with integrity.

Next time you are interviewing a prospective employee, after you have told the story of all that you love about your enterprise, take a breath and tell a little about what frustrates you. If this person does become a stakeholder in your enterprise, she will soon discover the frustrations so there is nothing to hide.

Lexicon: If there is one word in the English language that has strayed from its origin, that word is compete. From the Latin, *competere*, the direct translation of compete is *to strive together*. In the American Heritage Dictionary, compete is defined as *to strive against*. Defined in this way, the current usage is diametrically opposed to the word's origin. Next time you are discussing your competition, be aware if you intend to strive together or against.

Quotation: Phil Jackson, the former Chicago Bulls coach, takes the positive view of competition.

"It is not winning or losing that's important... it's the dance between you and your teammates, between you and your competitors. Don't even think of them as your opponents; they're your partners in the dance."

Musings: Batteries, the source of magic for many a childhood Christmas morning, are not what they once were. Along with the increased variety has come a more complex decision making process. While the issues are not new, we are now aware of them as we stare at a wall filled with alkaline, NiCAD, LiON, and NiMH batteries all with different impacts on the people who make and dispose of them, our wallets, and the environment.

As with many products, we now understand at least some of the impact associated with producing, maintaining, and disposing of batteries. The choice that we make ripples well beyond our use of the battery and so we attempt to weigh a multitude of variables to make the correct decision. As a consumer, every day we must take greater responsibility in our purchases as our children's and grandchildren's future depends on us.

There are no easy answers. In the end, we choose to the best of our ability and move on to the next decision.

Facts & Figures: Irish stores have cut back their use of plastic bags by 90 percent since the introduction of a tax on the bags six months ago. Faced with paying 10 cents per bag, shoppers are opting to bring their own reusable bags instead. Already a billion fewer bags are in circulation compared to last year.