



## In my opinion...

### DEAN SAYS:

## The Marks of Professionalism, Part VII—

## Going the second mile

"I want to be known as a professional," the aspiring businessman told me. What did he mean? What qualities mark a man or woman as a "professional?" So far in this series, I've suggested that *compassion, justice, common sense, commitment to excellence, a wholehearted determination to always tell the truth, and attention to details* are marks of a professional. This time I add to the list *going the second mile*.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you." (Matthew 5:38-42 NIV)

Jesus' words during that most famous discourse known as "The Sermon on the Mount," found in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapters 5, 6 and 7, have always startled people because they cut so sharply across the grain we call

"normal" in our gutsy and materialistic culture. Nevertheless, the deep underlying philosophy that this one known as Immanuel, *God With Us*, was teaching characterizes an individual who is determined to do his or her very best to meet and exceed the "customer's" demands.

"Now just one cotton-pickin' minute," you shout. "Are you trying to tell me that Jesus Christ was preaching a 'service excellence' philosophy?"

Exactly. God's Son was one who taught excellence as a way of life—permeating every aspect of one's being. So in a customer service realm, excellence often means going the second mile. Let me illustrate.

Recently, my wife, Shirley, was searching through the library at Central Connecticut State University trying to get some material on a project in the Pittsburgh (PA) public schools called "Arts Propel," that in turn is based on work done at Harvard University called "Project Zero." She needed the information for a research paper she was writing for one of her graduate courses. Everywhere she searched she kept hitting a dead end. Finally, she approached a librarian in charge of InterLibrary Loan, hoping that she would be able to locate some material from the Harvard Library.

"Let me look up that number for you," the librarian suggested. "Here it is. Listen, let me make the call for you."

After reaching the research librarian at the Harvard Library, the Central

librarian proceeded to efficiently and effectively establish a rapport with the Harvard librarian. She learned that there was a packet of information available. To speed the process of obtaining the information, she paid the fee out of her petty cash, rather than insisting that Shirley write a check that would have to clear before the information would be sent.

Shirley was astonished! For days she sung the praises of this librarian who did her job, plus went the second mile to make certain her customer was satisfied.

In the fire alarm and burglary alarm business, whether you are a manufacturer, installer, specifier, user, Authority Having Jurisdiction, testing laboratory, or whatever niche you have in the business, it pays dividends in the coinage of professionalism when you willingly go the second mile.

Maybe you've come up against a customer that never seems satisfied. No matter how hard you try to please this one, all you receive in return is complaint and criticism. Do you determine to get even, or do you keep on delivering top quality service, consistently bending over backwards to help your customer.

Or maybe you're a fire marshal or other Authority Having Jurisdiction who has plans review responsibility. When you spot some aspect of the job that makes you feel that the designer is going to have problem with one of the other reviewers do you ignore it, chuckling to yourself, or do you give the designer a call and suggest he or she check it out with the other department before it becomes a major snag?

As a manufacturer, do you continually remind yourself that your distributor is your partner in working hard to help your business grow, or do you repay years of a loyal and mutually beneficial relationship with unrelentingly hard-nosed financial policies when times get tough?

Going the second mile is not easy. But, going the second mile is another of those rare qualities that the true professional manifests in his or her business and personal life. It is the living out of an inner conviction. It sets the professional apart from his or her peers. □

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