



## **Employers of Choice Attacking Cancer**

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### **Dr. Leonard L. Berry**

In the 2001-2002 academic year, I used my sabbatical leave to study healthcare service at Mayo Clinic. It was one of the best decisions I've ever made in my life. My experience at Mayo was transformative, both professionally and personally. I returned home to Texas A&M hooked on healthcare and determined to contribute to an improved healthcare system.

Since returning from my sabbatical year, I have focused on learning as much as possible about healthcare so that I could build a bridge between my life's work in service quality, service management, and services marketing with my new interest in contributing ideas for a more patient-centered, effective, efficient, safer, and equitable healthcare system.

I wanted to begin with this background because it will provide context for three points I want to make today. I truly am honored to be at this meeting and to have an opportunity to speak.

#### **Point #1:**

#### ***Employers of choice make two fundamental kinds of investments.***

First, they invest in the creation of social profits. Companies create social profits when their actions produce net benefits to society beyond the marketing of goods and services and the employment of people, the necessary instruments of economic profits.

The spirit of social profit is investing financial and non-financial wealth (such as knowledge) possessed by the organizational community into the larger societal community. Social profit is analogous to profit sharing, except the profits are not limited to financial profits, and the sharing is not confined to the organization.

By generously sharing with society their talent, their leadership skills, and their money, excellent companies make a bigger, more meaningful difference in the quality of life; win the hearts of stakeholders; and become even more excellent companies.

Companies with the twin mission of creating financial and social profits generate greater employee pride than companies focused solely on financial profits.

The second investment employers of choice make is investing in the success of their employees. They invest in employees' skill and knowledge development, in their career pathing, in their sense of achievement, in giving them managers to work for who have integrity, and in their personal well-being and health.

Danny Meyer, founder of Union Square Café and numerous other successful New York City restaurants, wrote in his book, *Setting the Table*: "In restaurants, as in any other business, you stand a much better chance of ending up with the most customers when first you have the best employees." Firms that invest in creating social profits and in their employees' success, attract and retain the best employees.

### **Point #2:**

***Generosity is a critical input to corporate success, not just an outcome of success.***

Why? Because all businesses are service businesses. The definition of a service business is one that creates value for customers through performances (i.e., services).

All businesses do this. Some organizations, like Cigna, are purely in services; others like Johnson & Johnson, are hybrids: they create value with a combination of manufactured goods and services.

Organizations become and stay successful by creating superior value for customers, thus, a vital question for managers is: "How do we get the people performing services to perform at a high level and to keep doing it?"

Generosity is part of the answer. Creating social profits and investing in employees' success make a powerful impression on employees because they reflect generosity.

Whereas organizational selfishness depletes the human energy that people need to serve their customers (inside or outside the firm), organizational generosity inspires extra effort and greater engagement in the work.

All employees are volunteers. In virtually all jobs, a gap exists between the maximum amount of effort an employee can give and the minimum amount necessary to avoid being penalized. The difference between the maximum and the minimum is called "discretionary effort;" it is voluntary.

Employers of choice attract the best employees; generosity wins employees' hearts and inspires their best efforts. I believe a fundamental difference between superb and mediocre organizations is that the superb ones get more volunteerism from their employees.

### **Point #3:**

## ***We must broaden the meaning of the phrase "healthy company."***

The "healthy company" phrase typically is used to refer to a firm's financial health. We need to broaden the meaning to include the health of employees.

A truly healthy organization is sound not only financially, but also in the physical and mental well being of its employees.

Employers have an important leadership role to play in improving the health and well-being of employees. They have access to them. They have influence with them. They have a strong financial incentive. And they have business smarts; they know how to persuade, how to go to market, how to change behavior.

The best long-term way to lower healthcare benefit costs is a healthier workforce. And one of the best long-term ways to improve productivity is a healthier workforce. Presenteeism, in which employees are present for work but are less productive because they are ill or preoccupied with the health of a loved one, is a huge, hidden profit drain for companies.

Investing in workplace wellness is one of the single most generous investments an organization can make. But it must be done in the right way, integrated into the core of the organization's culture. Organizations that focus exclusively on cutting their healthcare benefit costs will jeopardize employees' trust; organizations that invest in a healthier workforce will strengthen employees' trust.

The CEO and other senior managers must lead the way in integrating wellness into the soul of an organization, into its core values. They must lead the way through the personal examples they set in their own behavior; in the wellness goals they set and the measures they use; and in the resource allocation decisions they make – including the quality of people they put in charge of wellness programming.

I am a passionate advocate of workplace wellness and am in the midst of implementing a field study of some of America's most progressive organizations on employee wellness. Several *Gold Standard* organizations are in the study.



The *CEO Cancer Gold Standard*<sup>™</sup> is the single most impressive initiative I've encountered in studying how employers are addressing employee wellness. It is impressive because cancer is a dreaded killer, because cancer is, as we all know, a wide-ranging group of diseases that can turn one's life upside down without warning, because attacking cancer means emphasizing the importance of individual responsibility in living a more healthful lifestyle. The initiative also impresses because it starts with the CEOs and it requires a genuine commitment to action within the organization.

Organizations that care enough about their employees to invest in the prevention, early detection, and best available treatments of cancer for them will surely be employers of choice, will be repaid for their generosity with high levels of volunteerism, and will have taken the meaning of “healthy” company to a higher, more literal level.

I spent several of my weeks at Mayo Clinic with the medical and radiation oncology practices. I want to close with a quote from Dr. Lynn Hartman, one of the medical oncologists I interviewed:

*“I want to know the person. What do they understand about their situation and what do they want to know. I want to inform them, answer their questions, and resolve disparities. I want my patients to feel in control. Patients often feel cancer has taken over their life and I try to help them regain a sense of control over their life. I like to give them something positive to think about and there almost always is something positive I can relate. I want them to find reason to have hope. I do tell them this has to be a priority for them, an investment in the future.*

*The first visit is a very delicate time. When patients come to see their oncologist they are incredibly vulnerable. I don’t want to brand someone with a number or a prediction.*

*One patient had recurrent breast cancer. The last three visits it was worse news each time. I like to give good news. It’s hard not to feel like you are inflicting this.*

*When September 11<sup>th</sup> happened, I thought now people know what cancer patients deal with everyday when a renegade fireball hits their lives. I have the privilege of serving these people. The firefighter heroes have fascinated many. I get to see a lot of personal heroism.”*

**Thank you for caring enough to attack the renegade fireball we call *cancer*.**

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