



BUSINESS ETHICS ARE NOT COMPLICATED

by Gary Bryant, Senior Vice President and National Sales Manager

Recently, Ford Meter Box received an e-mail request from a college student who attends a leading state university. The student had enrolled in a newly created business ethics class, and apparently, her class assignment resulted from the headlines of the day. At that time, the news was filled with stories of corporate fraud and scandals. Her request was straightforward, "Can you tell me if your company has a code of ethics and if so, how may I be able to obtain a copy of it?" This is an interesting question because at Ford Meter Box, the fundamentals of running an ethical business were so apparent that we never felt the need to commit them to paper.

However, the question about ethics is a fair one, and I began to ask other managers about their thoughts regarding the student's question. What would comprise our code of ethics? We discussed the comparison between Ford's successful practices versus the problems of other companies currently making the headlines. Many of those responding to the question reflected on the fact that The Ford Meter Box Company is a closely-held business that has prospered and grown steadily over its 100-year history. Ford's long-term stability is largely due to reasonable expectations from our shareholders. The pressure to achieve unrealistic short-term financial results was acknowledged as the root of many companies' demise.

Good companies recognize the importance of balancing the consequences for every employee involved in the business. In tough times, everyone tightens their belt and in good times the bounty is shared. The success of any company results directly from the actions of all its employees. We also discussed the virtues of a quality business – the ability to work fairly with vendors and maintain honest relationships with customers. The group's most important consensus was that consistent, high-quality ethics and success go hand in hand.

In due course, we posed the student's question to our President, Tom Hodson, and he answered with almost no hesitation. "Tell her our code is as follows: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' Tell her it's not any more complicated than that." He's absolutely right, it's not. Class dismissed.

