

Ethics? How To Take The Measure Of A Business

By Patty Baldwin

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Patty Baldwin
patty@allbizservices.com

All Biz Services <http://www.allbizservices.com>

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When asked to write a small piece pertaining to ethics and integrity in the business world, my first inclination was to draw on personal experience.

Everyone has bad experiences to relate. We deal with a business, determine that we were treated shabbily therefore that business has no integrity. Or perhaps we disagree on the implementation of a refund, hence the business or owner has no ethics.

Rather than using ethics or integrity to describe business practices, a better definition might be "character".

My dusty old copy of Webster's New World Dictionary provides the following definitions for use in this context:

ethics...the study of standards of conduct and moral judgment; moral philosophy.

integrity...the quality or state of being of sound moral principle; uprightness, honesty, and sincerity.

character...an individual's pattern of behavior or personality; moral constitution. moral strength; self-discipline, fortitude, etc. reputation.

If you will look at these definitions you can see that ethics relates to standards of conduct. Period. Ethics are...no good or bad comes into the mix. Integrity either is or isn't. Sound moral principle is relative to the observer or end user.

It stands to reason, therefore, that the best measure of good or bad practice falls to basic "character".

Okay, so what does all of this have to do with business. Well, I wish I had a nickel for every time someone has asked me the following questions:

"How do I tell if a business is good or bad?"

"How do I know where to shop?"

"Are they a good business?"

My response is always the same...check the fruit on the tree. What is the pattern of behavior? What is the company's reactive personality? Is the moral constitution flexible rather than rigid? Check the reputation.

The offline world provides numerous resources to determine the patterns and trends of businesses. Trade associations, chambers of commerce, better business bureaus etc.

In the online world, however, we are still treading murky waters when it comes to measuring the "character" of a business. By far, the best route to take are testimonials.

Testimonials on your website are powerful. But, they must be honest and sincere. Don't just make them up. Add a link back to the provider and it will increase your credibility TENFOLD!

Now I know what you're thinking, "Who wants to be answering tons of email for ME?" Nobody. That's why you use the technology available at your fingertips. With the permission of the author, use a line or two of their testimonial on your site with a link to an autoresponder for the full message.

Now, sit back and watch your credibility soar!

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Patty Baldwin is a former Better Business Bureau executive and the owner of several online businesses. A successful net marketer, she invites you to visit any one of her sites at:

<http://www.allbizservices.com>

<http://www.4bstrading.com>

<http://www.allbizwealth.com>

Mailto:patty@allbizservices.com

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