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Excellence and success

**Success does not always derive from excellence.
Sometimes it derives from worse. Much worse.**



This *guest bullet* comes from an April 1998 issue of DesignFAX magazine. This is a trade publication targeted at design engineers. This article is too old to be in their archives.

The author, Terry Persun, now has his own website and writes novels, poems and short stories. He certainly has the perceptive mind for it.

A Safe Place To Work

Terry Persun

Our Technical Editor, Richard Mandel, recently emailed me this quote: "The most dementing of all modern sins: the inability to distinguish excellence from success." --David Hare (an English playwright).

In contemplating this statement, I am somewhat saddened to agree. Although it is not always the case, it is often proven in the corporate world that a person whose greatest intention and effort is towards excellence, is not typically viewed as being successful.

The successful person often is the one who kneels down to the altar of his or her superior and agrees with every word that comes from their mouth. And, consequently, said superior does the same for their superior, and on up the line.

My question: Is it successful to compromise your most lofty intentions, is it successful to compromise excellence, just to make more money, to be "recognized" by others in the business world as a -- you name it: team player, good old boy, supportive employee -- and to climb the ladder of "yes-people" who have lost all capability of thinking on their own?

How could such a person get up in the morning and look in the mirror without the least sense of a fading image? An overall 'wimpy-ness' has infiltrated many of our manufacturing companies. (I don't care if you fire people. That's not any less wimpy. It has always been easier to fire someone rather than develop them.)

Excellence is reward unto itself, no matter how many relatives and friends tell you that you have "failed". It is the system that has, and often does, fail its best individuals. And for numerous reasons. Lack of understanding. Fear of someone different. Fear of losing their own 'successful' place in the company. Or just plain and simple jealousy and envy.

We are all different, and I believe that when we continually try to shove a round peg into a square hole, we're destroying what we had originally set out to do, and that is to produce a great product, while at the same time provide a place for creative people to spread their wings and fly.

All that said, I want to add that this does not mean that dishonesty and rudeness should be allowed. Remember excellence? Intention? We should celebrate our differences, recognize one another's strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. And we should provide a safe place in which employees can fully exercise their strengths, as well as develop their weaknesses into strengths.

If we would only take one moment out of each day to remember ourselves as children and how we excelled in one subject while our best friend excelled in another. How we would help one another learn, and thereby get through school. How' we wanted nothing but to find a job doing what it is we love to do -- with minimal, if any, time spent on that which we did not enjoy doing.

If we would only remember these small things, perhaps we could become more compassionate, more understanding, more open to another's differences, and stop demanding that people agree with us. tow the line, and follow the leader.