

Father Knows Best – 4 Lessons in Business by Deborah Chaddock Brown



On February 19th I lost my father, Paul H. Chaddock, to idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. It was just nineteen days from when the doctors diagnosed his illness until his death. He was 72.

I had the unbelievable gift of spending four days with him and our family just prior to his passing; a time in which we shared words of love, encouragement and faith.

On my last night in town, Dad called me back to the hospital to share his thoughts on the outline to a book we'd been working on together since last fall called **Make or Break Moments**. As the retired VP Human Resources for Lechmere Corp. and Managing Partner of Lechmere, I continually sought his advice and counsel in running my business. As I think back over the many things he taught me as a person and an entrepreneur; I realized many have value across all industries:

Be true to yourself. Dad started as a salesman for Addressograph-Multigraph (a rival to IBM in the 50s/60s) and far surpassed his peers. He climbed the corporate ladder to sit on the Board of Lechmere and always acted with integrity and honesty. He had tough customers, impossible corporate challenges and a few bosses straight from H-E-double tooth-picks, but he never wavered from the Golden Rule. He counseled and taught me the value of being true in a corporate world of Yes Men, compromisers and back-stabbers.

"It will come back and bite you" he would counsel when I'd consider giving in and going along. You can't go wrong with honesty, even when honesty is the road less traveled.

View change as an adventure. Growing up we moved every couple years as he was promoted in his career. Being the new kid in the middle of the school year was tough. But he taught me that accepting – no EMBRACING change, allows you to learn more, experience more and enjoy a life of possibilities rather than one of complaints.

"I have no regrets," he assured me.

Put yourself in the other person's shoes. In business and in life, he taught me that having empathy for the other person allows you to understand where they are coming from. Understanding your customers, your employees and your boss helps to improve communications and fosters relationships that benefit both parties.

"If you understand where they are coming from and what is important to them, you can work together to accomplish the goal," he told me.

Being a 'customer service' company starts at the top. This is the lesson Dad taught me on that last night. Customer Service starts with the CEO establishing a culture, mission, vision and a set of values that put the customer first. Then each subsequent layer of management has to have a function and a role that work together to tie the vision of being a customer-focused organization to the roles, responsibilities and expectations of every employee in order to bring it to life.

"If the vision is "customer" but the expectations are "make the register ring" you have a disconnect that the customer will sense and you'll fail to create a customer-focused environment," he stressed.

For almost four hours he elaborated on this last lesson and my notes are the precious foundation for the book that will be released by Paul Chaddock and Deborah Chaddock Brown called **Make or Break Moments**.

I know that to most of us our parents are an inspiration. They brought us into this world and raised us the best they knew how. They loved us and cared for us and wanted only our happiness. My father was no different. However, I enjoyed the added benefit of years of healthy, invigorating debate about business and customer service. He was a tough task master – just ask any of his secretaries – but it was because he had a vision of excellence for his customers, his employees and the companies he worked for and with and would accept nothing less.

We can all benefit by putting Paul's lessons into practice.

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