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Book Analysis on “Do the Kind Thing” by Daniel Lubetzky

A glance at “Do the Kind thing,” gives an impression that it’s an audacious self-promotion for KIND bars and products, the author’s company. The cover of the book bears logo, font and colors of KIND’s healthy snacks, while the book gives the autobiography of its author and the spectacular growth of the billion dollar food product enterprise. In this book Daniel Lubetzky highlights the revolutionary standards that he has employed in shaping KIND’s business model and achieve the success the company enjoys today. Along with that he gives an unaltered and deeply personal perspective of a pioneering social entrepreneur’s mind. His inspiration comes from his father, a Jew and Holocaust survivor courtesy of kind strangers. Lubetzky launched his business venture by obtaining a sun-dried tomato spread from strife- prone Middle East, made out of a joint effort of the Jews and Arabs, which he hand-sold. The setbacks he experienced at first did not blur his “not-only-for-profit” business vision.

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Instead of letting circumstances to push them into choosing one option over another due to incompatibility like other companies, KIND endeavors to say “AND”. The heart of this idea is posing a challenge on assumptions and bogus trade-offs. It advocating for the willingness to take bigger risks, mostly the financial ones, instead of settling for less. Emphasis is also laid on gaining

knowledge on boundless and critical thinking, and following the path that looks tough at first, but has greater benefits later. With the use of enlightening episodes borrowed from his personal career, together with a celebration of some previous downfalls through the lessons they taught him, Lubetzky highlights his main tenets for the formation of a blooming business and an auspicious social establishment. He analyzes the benefit of sticking to one's brand, points out the significance of communication and transparency in places of work, and gives an explanation for the insufficiency of good intentions in the sale of products.

Communication

Communication has always been and will remain to be a remarkably crucial tool in the success of any organization, and Lubetzky's case is not an exception. As he highlights some of the things that led to the success of KIND as a food business, he attributes it to a packaging breakthrough that was inspired out of the desire of his company to communicate to its clients with the greatest integrity possible. Lubetzky says, "We really strive to ensure authenticity in all our marketing" (Lubetzky 171). The decision of the company to package their products in clear wrappers was out of their intention to make the core values of KIND real. The author reveals that the opportunity that existed in the food industry came to him after realizing the exaggeration and deception that was rampant in the industry, which a majority of consumers are subjected to day by day. Despite the fact that the KIND bars were products of whole meal foods like nuts and grain, Lubetzky thought it could be easy for his company to show the consumers how different it was from its competitors in the industry by giving the clients a chance of seeing and confirming what they were buying. "My gut feeling is that consumers have been conditioned to mistrust images purporting to show what the product in the box will look like and end up being disappointed," (Lubetzky 171) Lubetzky continues to assert. The company insists in displaying

the real product and highly discourages the use of images to for transparency and integrity purposes. To reinforce the values that the transparent packaging implies, KIND also uses a minimalist design and simple yet relevant product names. The names they give their products are simply the descriptors of the products like, Roasted Jalapeno, Almond & Apricot, Oats & Honey \Clusters, just to mention a few.

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The company has also succeeded in the effective communication of its core values to the public the branding of their products and the marketing strategies they employ. “Consumers often give us feedback that our value proposition – simplicity, minimal processing, lack of artificial ingredients, straightforward marketing that avoids gimmicks and deception – feels and is authentic” (Lubetzky 172), Lubetzky affirms. This company has been dependent on its open communication scheme that has been instrumental in attaining a huge following by the American consumers who also have the enthusiasm of sharing the core values of KIND. Their communication has not only been limited to clients only but it also used in ensuring efficiency within the company. The company employees, technical teams, partners, and executives have always believed in and promote proper communication practices as they endeavor to work as a team in availing the best products to their clients. “Less visibly, we foster open communication with our team and our strategic partners, own up to our errors, and handle transitions in lieu of ‘firing’ people” (Lubetzky 171). The author of “Do the Kind Thing” has clearly indicated that communication, both within an organization and towards the clients, plays a major role in the development and excellence of business enterprises.

Findings of a hiring trends survey that was conducted in 2012 by Express Employment Professionals, both executives and other workers were in agreement about communication being a concern in contemporary workplaces. Their reports attested that throughout America, the executives and employees agreed that in their leadership teams, communication was the trait they lacked most (Zimmer). The survey also revealed that communication was the most desirable quality in a good leader. Meetings rank highest as the form of communication in the workplace. Reports from a Microsoft survey indicate that in a week, five hours are more are spent in meetings however, 71% of the participants claimed that meetings are unproductive. Success in business lies in excellent communication skills. Regardless of the innovativeness of a business idea, or the specialized services offered, or the great need of the products by the consumers, poor articulation of what is supposed to be done for clients will lead to failure. Excellent communication is not only important for the success in marketing but in enabling employees to share information with each other and with their management personnel. Failure to communicate ideas by team members will make the whole organization to fall short of its goals, and that will be a recipe to failure. As much as the research information concurs with Lubetzky on the importance of communication within a business organization and towards its clients, it lacks the bit of involving integrity and transparency as companies market their products and try to reach out to potential clients.

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Corporate Culture

Lubetzky came up with this company not just for profit but for something more, he intended to advocate for kindness and collaboration in society. This has remained the culture of this organization since its inception. Lubetzky affirms that kindness is the core of his company's

culture and their main aim is to spread kindness and promote a culture of kindness even as they promote healthy living through the sale of healthy snacks. After learning how his father's life was saved by an act of kindness from a stranger, he decided to come up with a company based on a culture of kindness, since he had understood how crucial it was to nurture a culture of kindness. The company has endeavored to nurture a culture of engaging healthy discussions as a team, where each member's ideas are appreciated. KIND believes in making each individual comfortable, with an allowance for challenging Lubetzky's or any other team member's ideas without situations of both parties interpreting the concerns as personal attacks. It is expected of the members' feedbacks to each other to be honest, since the company's golden rule is addressing the affected party in the way you need to. There are people who find it uncomfortable to critique their colleagues, even in instances where it is necessary for their own good, but turning back from doing the necessary will get them in a worse situation than they could have been when you needed to correct them. The use of this kind of open and candid way of communication reduces the occurrence of gossip and instead creates an atmosphere and culture of professionalism, loyalty, and trust.

Still in the spirit and culture of kindness, Lubetzky confesses that he has always treated his employees with empathy, and also encouraged the senior employees to treat those below them in the same manner. "Firing" is a term that he confirms that he has never liked, together with the effects that come with it. When considering a team member who has dedicated his/her valuable time and efforts for the sake of the organization, then all of a sudden he/she is given a directive to get all that belongs to them, leave and never come back again, the author finds it disrespectful and quite avoidable. In his company, the team has a challenge of handling the departures empathetically. For them if the case at hand is not a serious case or an incident of voluntary misbehavior, then an individual's job cannot be terminated without being given a chance to make

things better or even a notice. He gives a number of incidents where his employees had incidents that put their jobs in jeopardy but they worked around them as a team, and finally got solutions that did not strain either the company or the affected team members. For instance the executive director for OneVoice, Darya had delivered and needed a more flexible work routine after her maternity leave that could not be demanding. “She crafted a job as OneVoice’s director of social entrepreneurship, and helped train her executive director replacement” (Lubetzky 187). At times all the team member needs is more time and support to get better. The company has made it an obligation that all the team members respect and uphold this culture. The author gives an example of an incident that happened seven years back where a member he gives an arbitrary name of Edwina who had been in the company for a few years but was not performing as required and had derailed the business. In that effect, her manager sent her packing one day under the watch of her colleagues. The author did not like that when he got the news and he says, “when I found out about, I was terribly embarrassed, as well as worried about the effect on the morale of the rest of the team. I called Edwina to apologize for the way she had been treated” (Lubetzky 189). The culture of this company surely comes out as that of kindness not only to the clients and the rest of the world as their vision is but also to the employees who are steering the company too, through encouraging them to treat each other with kindness and patience in all the situations they encounter.

Workplace culture is an important aspect of any successful organization. The existence of a workplace culture that is based on trust is greatly valuable but if the top leadership of the organization does not believe in the culture then it is good for nothing (Rohman). A good workplace culture’s benefits start with the company’s ability to lure and retain employees. Owing to the success a good culture brings, talented workers will want to be associated with it, and so it will be easy for them to not only join but stay for very long, making it better and sparing it the pain of

hiring and rehiring. A good and culture automatically makes the company brand strong. The organization and loyalty that comes with a good culture easily garners many ambassadors for the company brand and eventually gets it more clients. Lubetzky advocates for a strong culture just like the rest but he goes an extra mile by making his culture specifically pegged on the value of kindness and empathy towards all humanity. The culture he advocates for is not aimed at fostering financial success for the business but endeavors to make the life of humanity better.

Misbehavior

In any organization or community, regardless of how good it could be, there are times when incidents of misbehavior are witnessed from either the members of even from the people it serves. According to the author, his organization has not been spared of such an occurrence. He writes about incidents of misbehavior and how they handled them as a team, with regard to the values and culture of their organization. Even with such incidents, the company's culture of kindness and empathy always weighs in the determination of how the affected members should be brought to justice. The author uses one devastating case as an example, where a senior member of the company consistently misbehaved and later turned out to be very dangerous to the company despite the fact that the author had treated him best, to the extent of preventing one of his senior managers from firing him. Just like the culture of the company is, he was given many chances to rectify his mistakes and do better despite his adamancy and instead of firing him, Lubetzky offers him a good departure deal which he declines. "After some discussion with Kevin, we offered him what we considered an extremely fair offer: a six month transition period out of the company, during which he would live in the city he had chosen and help train his replacement. He could keep his stock options in the company, which he would have lost had he quit" (Lubetzky 191). This case ends up in court after Kevin takes all his belongings one day and disappears, and on

investigating the team finds out that he had stolen the company's confidential information and made a deal with a rival company to sell them KIND's secrets on operations and marketing. After a long and tiresome legal battle that took them a lot and caused them much anxiety, KIND wins the case but after all the ingratitude Kevin showed, betrayal, and the pain he got them through, Lubetzky sympathizes with him. Lubetzky says, "The incident was extraordinarily dispiriting to me. Even though Kevin deserved the headaches he brought upon himself, including his own legal bills and all the embarrassment and aggravation, I felt bad for him. I had considered him a friend, I still get a sad feeling when I think of that episode" (Lubetzky 194). The author believes that most of the time when wronged, people tend to over-react and that's when they retrench those they believe they should. Instead of that he believes "Lack of empathy can lead to misunderstandings, lost opportunities, and burned bridges. In a business environment, that can destroy value" (Lubetzky 195). At the end the author concludes by saying by giving insight towards what made him resort to invoking empathy in all situations regardless of how bad they are. He says, "I've learned how powerful empathy can be, and how important it is to have the courage to use it, particularly when you feel most vulnerable" (Lubetzky 195).

Misbehavior at the workplace manifests in numerous ways, stealing being one of them. Other than taking legal action, organizations can use prevention measures, which happen to be a better remedy than punishment. Leaders should set good examples to their employees by being ethical and courteous. They should also develop ethical climates that will discourage engagement in vices and also come up with detailed crisis plans that offer response parameters in case of incidences. Leaders will also curb misbehavior by treating their employees right (Ivancevich, Konopaske and Matteson 223). Lubetzky seems to be in agreement with the use of prevention

measures than solving the misbehavior crisis when it occurs from the values of his organization, he treats them right but even when they misbehave he still remains empathetic to them.

Conclusion

“Do the Kind Thing” does not differ with the research findings on organizational behavior and management but instead comes out as more specific and biased to some values. The author writes about a successful food company he started, not just for the sake of making huge profits but for the sake of making the life of humanity better by first giving them quality snacks and then by extending kindness to them. He emphasizes on kindness and empathy and gives examples to strengthen his claims on the importance of those values in the corporate world. He also advocates for honesty and integrity by corporations as they serve their clients. His main aim is to let the world know about kindness and make it part of their lives because he has seen its importance in his life.

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