

# The Secret to Power in Business

by Glenn Clark

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## IX. Enthusiasm and Joy

I had just graduated from high school and was spending the summer working with a gang of Italian laborers on a railroad track-raising job. A young surveyor, Ralph Budd, with his two chain-men, frequently went over the road in their little power-driven handcar, and very frequently Ralph Budd would stop and look over the work and have a little visit with me. I can never forget the enthusiasm with which he described the curves and the dips that he was straightening out. He was correcting and adjusting them so artistically that a train could strike the curve full speed and not lose momentum as it bent its course around the winding track. No poet ever described sunsets and sunrises with more enthusiasm and joy than Ralph Budd described those curves and dips. His courtesy and happiness radiated out upon all the workers, so that they all looked forward to his coming. When later J. J. Hill met this young man, he discovered the one thing that his company needed. I never found a more contented set of workers in any company than I found in the Great Northern offices when Ralph Budd was president. At that time there was a smaller turnover of employees there than in any company in America. No one wanted to leave his job.

A. N. Williams was destined to be a great executive, but in midlife he found himself sidetracked in a field of work that seemed to offer no opportunities for advancement. The railroad business was at its lowest ebb. When I had my first serious talk with him, he said, "I am the water-boy for a defunct railroad." When I asked for more specific details, he said he was assistant to the president of a railroad that was in the hands of a receiver. I asked if his associates were gloomy, and he said they certainly were and that he was not doing anything to cheer them up. He said he had decided to put his religion into practice, and that he was going to do his best, henceforth, to spread love and joy throughout the business.

A year later he said, "Thirteen railroad presidents are meeting in Chicago and are considering me for the president of a railroad that unites all the railroads. I wish you would pray for me." A few weeks later he said, "Those thirteen railroad presidents

unanimously elected me president of the road. I want to invite you to come down to Chicago next summer and go with me in my private car with all my executives, over the entire line, and lay a little prayer and blessing upon all of our work." The following summer when I took that ride, the different executives told me, one by one, that he had accomplished more in five months than any other president could in five years.

He rented a hall, and invited all his employees to meet with him, expecting five hundred to come and, to his amazement, two thousand came, so he had to take them in three installments. In these talks he built up the spirit of teamwork and goodwill, much as my father had done with his agents, and as Ralph Budd accomplished with his employees. He followed this up with a picnic for the employees and their wives and children, at one of Chicago's parks. It was arranged so the men on the day run could come in the evenings, and the men on the night run could come in the day. The company furnished free lemonade, ice cream and coffee. And the wives and children, many of whom had been cooped up in hot apartments all summer, had the time of their lives. Awards were given to the men who had worked for the company the longest. The company was turned into something similar to a great big happy family, and greater prosperity than ever before flowed into it.

Later Mr. Williams was elevated to the presidency of the Lehigh Railroad, and from there he was called to the presidency of the Western Union. Synchronizing with his coming to it, its business has quadrupled in volume.

When I was a boy in Des Moines, the greatest grocery store was Chase Brothers. Everyone wanted to trade there, because every clerk had a joyous quality about him and acted as though he were the personal proprietor of the store. I can never forget how even the humblest clerk with a pad in his hand and pencil behind his ear would say to Mother with joy in his voice, "I have some of the loveliest strawberries that just came in, Mrs. Clark! I would love to set aside a few boxes for you if you wish." It is a tradition in Des Moines to this day that not only was the Chase Brothers store a success, but it trained more successful grocers who later opened stores of their own, than any store of its kind in America.

It is told of Mr. Walgreen that when he began his first drugstore he found the long evening hours tedious and boring. In order to put a little fun into his work, he worked out a number of little devices and clever tricks to make the hours pass in a more exciting manner. For instance, when a customer would call up and ask for a delivery of several quarts of ice cream for some guests that had just arrived, he would signal one of his clerks to prepare and deliver the goods immediately while he kept the customer engaged in conversation long enough for the goods to arrive. In the midst of the conversation the customer would exclaim, "Just hold the line for a minute; the doorbell has just rung." A few seconds later she would return exclaiming, "Why, that was the ice cream that I just got through ordering, and here it has already arrived! How marvelous!"

Everyone likes to go into an establishment where everyone is happy. We hear a great deal of "Service With A Smile." I consider it to be one of the most spiritual qualities—the joy the workers get in their work—and their capacity to spread happiness to others. Every good sales executive knows the importance of cheerfulness, the friendly handshake, the genial smile, and the frank manner of a well-trained salesman. The great English House of Selfridge and Company states the necessity of expressing joy in one's work in the following words:

"We are strong believers in the quality of cheerfulness during business hours. Cheerfulness is a happy infection which here finds its way into every corner where work is in progress. It is reflected in the attitude of our staff toward the public. It is definitely good for business and for the individual. We insist on a spirit of good cheer throughout this vast business. We have no use for the man with the perpetual frown, for more often than not he is bowed down only by the weight of his own importance. We believe that in this House, more than any other similar establishment in the world, will be found cheerfulness, a sense of humor and good comradeship, because they emanate from the heads."