

By *Bill Guertin*

The 800-Pound Gorilla

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An Open Letter From Your Future New Boss

You've been in a couple of interviews with us now. We like you, and you seem to like us. We have an opening, and we need it filled. But there are some questions I'd like to ask you that my attorney doesn't like.

He doesn't like them because candidates like you may think they're too forward. But in the position I'm in today, they're important for me to know if I'm going to hire you.

We're what's considered a small business. Even though there are nearly 70 million of us in America, most people don't understand how difficult it is to run a small business and keep the doors open.

You can help us. In fact, we're anxious for you to help us. But the latest studies by the Society for Human Resource Management tells us that it costs about \$3,500 to replace just one entry-level employee, and up to four times an annual salary for managers and other high-level team members. With numbers like that, we can't afford to make a mistake very often.

Within a small business, the chemistry among employees is extremely important. So here's what I really want to ask you before I take a risk on you:

- Our company makes a difference in the lives of the people we serve. We go over and above to do whatever it takes to satisfy our customers. What we do is hard work. Some days are more challenging than others. But we all realize that if we aren't all pulling in the same direction, just one of us can destroy the hard work that all of us have put in.

Are you willing to accept responsibility for others, including our customers, suppliers, and co-workers, to help us grow... or are you just in it for yourself and a paycheck?

- We've worked hard to keep our community image strong. People buy from others they trust, and what we've found is that people see our team members as representatives of us, even when they're not at work. Our employees understand this, and they conduct themselves appropriately in other places.

Are you the kind of person we'd be proud to call one of our own, or do you do things on your personal time that would hurt our image as a company?

- Over the years, we've developed systems and practices that work well. We're prepared to train you and bring you up to speed. Some people have come through our doors, however, and thought that they could do it "differently," and they thought it was OK. We may be open to new ideas, but when you first come aboard, we have a system we'd like for you to follow.

Are you willing to be trained, or will you insist on "doing your own thing"?

- A generation ago, people regularly put in 25 years or more with a company, and expected that the company would "take care of them" with retirement benefits in their later years. That's not how the world works today. According to the Employee Benefit Research Institute in Washington, D.C., the average employee in America today will change jobs every 5 years, and economically, there are no guarantees.

We're going to care about you as a human being, but please understand that as your employer, we can't guarantee you a job forever. Even though we're optimistic about the future, we can't promise that demand for what we do will continue to allow the need for your position.

Are you OK with that?

If any of these questions make you uneasy, please tell me now. My hope is that after reading this, you'll take a good look at yourself as an employer sees you, and decide to make the changes that will ultimately make you more valuable to others.

That's what business is all about. Not entitlement and jobs and paychecks, but rendering service, creating value, and ultimately earning the reward for your efforts.

So... do you still want to come to work for us?

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