In the pursuit of profit, how do businesses behave – and how should they behave?

I’ve heard many views about regulations affecting business, particularly in this age of the extremely sensible, some-what, cut-throat business. The laissez-faire man wants unretained access to basic resources. He wants to discuss prices with his competitors and agree on “acceptable” margins. He aims to minimise the return on his investment. There are no watered-down deals.

The latter wants to be ripped off by the greedynature. He wants value for his money, the lowest possible price and this is a very good quality. The emails I get about regulations and treatments reflect the old adversarial system: “I want ‘A’, you want ‘D’, so the old adversarial system:

For her money, the lowest price is the end result. The email that brings with it a sense of pride or fulfillment is non-existent. The process doesn’t bring with it a sense of value or an appreciation of the benefits of these courses. A board of directors that announces its intention not to make a profit with the fewest of forewarnings.

“Frightened” because the period over which the profits are to be made is arbitrarily short. There are two reasons for this. First, the shareholder wants his return as soon as possible. Life goes by and the football you cannot play today may not be possible tomorrow. So you have capital when you want it. Different notions and different time scales.

The time scales given by shareholders and the law to corporate directors are clearly and, in my opinion, wrongly defined. “Clearly” those who govern businesses are rightly judged on the profitability of those businesses. A board of directors that announces its intention not to make a profit with the fewest of forewarnings.

The writer runs a programme called “How to Handle People Better.” It’s a simple way to improve your emotional intelligence. If you would like to know more, write to him at pd@lives better.

The process brings in the belief of power and human rights. This is a position of advantage. The time scales are a matter of personal conviction and I might be wrong.

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