The Catering Institute™

Culture Trumps Strategy:

What I Learned from Ben & Jerry's

A Catering Institute Original Essay by Erle Dardick *Founder and CEO, The Catering Institute™*

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I love working in the field with MonkeyMedia Software's customers, especially with the franchisees and their employees. I enjoy working on the front line with customers, and I especially love helping our young restaurant community members to "up their game" in the world of catering. Lucky for me, I now have this wonderful opportunity to really do the work I love.

> *"As I immersed myself into the franchisee system, I was greeted with open arms, a high level of trust and a willingness to share and learn."*

I was invited to speak at the Ben & Jerry's Global Franchisee Meeting 2013 about catering and off-premise for their brand. I'd like to share with you what I learned as I continue on this very personal journey. My visit with the Ben & Jerry's family was very special, completely unique and transformative in many ways.

Let me just say that what I learned the most from this experience is that culture trumps strategy every single time. You see, Ben & Jerry's is owned by Unilever, a large multinational conglomerate with business interests all over the globe. But no matter, as part of their mission statement, activism is part of the plan for B&J. They have a corporate campaign running called "Get the dough out of politics."

It's been that way since the beginning. So, you can imagine how nervous a multinational conglomerate can get when their brand ambassadors push the limits of the campaign by standing up for something like this... check out Ben and Jerry's www.stampstampede.org. Talk about creative!

As I immersed myself into the franchisee system, I was greeted with open arms, a high level of trust and a willingness to share and learn. And so, I made sure I spent time trying to understand their ways. I joined in on their activities, attended their education sessions and spent time speaking to their group about catering and the work that MonkeyMedia Software is doing to help our customers grow the off premise sales channel.

This was truly a unique life experience. You see, even though they are owned by such a large corporation, they have gone a long way to make sure that they remain responsible social citizens, as Ben and Jerry have always done. They are serious about their ongoing activism and theirbusiness culture is one of the most unique that I may have ever experienced.

I met wonderful, smart, hardworking and honest people throughout all levels of their organization. I am impressed by their sense of who they are, what they stand for and the responsibility that they take to make a difference in their communities that they serve. Independence lives strong and the culture runs deep in their DNA. They have a deep belief system. Now that I have met so many people in the Ben & Jerry's family, I am touched deeply by their passion and their unwavering focus about sticking to their core values. The culture that Ben & Jerry established early on, lives more strongly today and they have an incredible desire to act toward the common good, while maintaining an economic model that allows them to stay in business.

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What I Learned from Ben & Jerry's

As with all companies at this scale, they do have a business strategy that is sound. However, finding the balance between the conservative ownership of Unilever and the activism for positive change that runs deep in their brand culture, is not an easy thing. They have chosen the hard path where others would have packed up and gone home long ago.

For me, their heritage and culture is so rich, that in fact, it completely trumps the business strategy. These people are connecting emotionally in their communities and their group understands that waking up in the morning to do important work is not just about money. They acknowledge that it needs to be there, but that in fact it is a byproduct of their group's higher purpose. I learned alot this past weekend. What a gift that Ben & Jerry's gave me this week!

Let's talk catering.

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About The Catering Institute

The Catering Institute is a leading educator in takeout, delivery and catering, providing training, certification and consulting to restaurant operators and their teams.

The Catering Institute is a private, independent academic institution. Led by founder and CEO Erle Dardick, the faculty at the Catering Institute is passionate about helping brands excel at feeding their customers where they Live, Work & Play™.

Learn more:
www.cateringinstitute.com

About Erle Dardick

Erle Dardick is a 17-year catering veteran, business turn-around expert and author, best known for helping multi-unit restaurant executives create successful catering revenue channels. Erle founded both MonkeyMedia Software and The Catering Institute. He is also the Author of "Get Catering and Grow Sales! A Strategic Perspective for The Multi-Unit Restaurant Executive."

Get Catering and Grow Sales!™

A Strategic Perspective for the Multi-Unit Restaurant Executive

By **Erle Dardick**

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As Partners in Education, MonkeyMedia Software, PepsiCo Foodservice, and Catering Insights work with the Catering Institute, to help restaurant operators grow sales and increase profits by educating them to become experts at feeding their customers where They Live, Work and Play™.

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