

Act Like You Own the Place!

Early in her career, Sally Alexander West was promoted to a supervisory position in a department where every single employee was at least ten years older than she. Eager to do well, she asked her manager for some advice. He responded, “Just act like you own the place.”

No doubt, this statement was intended to bolster Ms. West’s confidence and overcome her innate shyness and relative lack of experience. But over the years, she has come to realize that this concept triggers actions and attitudes that lead to success. What does it mean to think like an owner?

- **Owners Are Customer Focused:** Owners strive to make every customer interaction a positive one. This holds true whether your “customers” are individuals who purchase an end product; patients; students or the public. We are admonished to go beyond a “checklist mentality” and develop a mindset best typified by the one rule that Ms. West cites in the Nordstrom employee handbook: *Use best judgment in all situations.*
- **Owners Are Responsible for the End Result:** When there is dissatisfaction with our product or service, it is tempting to hide in one’s silo and point fingers at other individuals or departments that may have dropped the ball. But the “owner mentality” dictates that *everyone* has a stake in correcting the problem and should therefore have a sincere interest in the service recovery process. While it may seem foreign to think beyond what’s happening outside of one’s own department or function, it’s healthy to take an interest in the well-being and success of the organization as a whole.



- **Owners Are Persistent:** Many businesses operate at a loss during start-up and growth phases and an owner must not only keep faith during lean times but may also have to convince employees, investors and sometimes even family to do the same. If your place of employment (business; healthcare facility; school; agency) is experiencing tough challenges, a positive and determined attitude will help create the “buoyancy” that will keep the enterprise afloat amidst an ocean of rejection.
- **Owners Take the Long View:** Ms. West cites Michael Dell, who stated after recently taking his company, Dell, Inc., private, “We need to be looking not just at the quarter ahead, but at the decade ahead and investing to create value for customers as long-term relationships with long-term vision.” Regardless of your position in the organization, never hesitate to share your ideas and “vision” with senior management.

Additional ideas on how to *Think Like an Owner*, can be found in Ms. West’s article of this same name in the December, 2013 issue of **Strategic Finance** (pps.30-34). You may also wish to visit your EAP Information Resources site at the web address below to explore trainings and articles that may help you attain a higher level of internal and external customer service within your organization.