

Smashed Cheeseburgers and Surface Finishing

What would you do differently if your customer was always watching?

Having ordered two cheeseburgers and a cola, I patiently waited my turn at the fast food drive-thru. All was going according to plan, cash paid, change delivered. Until the little white bag, about to be extended out the drive-thru window... slipped out of the cashier's hand and landed on the floor of the restaurant.

The cashier inhaled abruptly in surprised disappointment, and immediately looked to see if I had noticed. I could sense the wheels turning. "Did he see or didn't he? Should I pretend like nothing happened and just give this poor guy his undoubtedly compacted and smashed up cheeseburgers or should I scrap them in favor of fresh ones?"

All of this transpired in a matter of seconds, and I quickly realized that the determining factor in her decision had nothing to do with what the right thing to do might be in such a situation. Instead, her decision appeared to hinge on whether I had noticed her mishap. In the end, she concluded that I had, in fact, seen my two little cheeseburgers fall to the floor.

Immediately thereafter she disappeared behind the magic fast food curtain and returned with a new bag containing two new burgers.

As I considered the cashier's decision process (did he see, or didn't he?) my mind raced to a quote I remember by former member of the U.S. House of Representatives and standout University of Oklahoma quarterback, J.C. Watts, who once

story about my mutilated cheeseburgers and a quote from a college quarterback turned politician has to do with surface finishing. The answer is that this whole episode led me to ponder how each of us might perform our tasks... if we knew our customer was watching.

For a clue to the answer, ponder for a moment the mayhem and attention to detail that occurs in many finishing shops the day or so before a major customer or prospect visit. Tools put in their proper place for easy retrieval, floor scrubbed, product identified. Safety hazards such as blocked fire doors or an errant electrical cord rectified.

If your customer was always watching, would the people working on the shop floor read the work instructions and shop floor travelers more closely to ensure that parts were being processed according to plan? Would your machine operators inspect outgoing product more carefully? Would that marginal part make it into the bin to be shipped, or be set aside for rework? Would a little more time be dedicated to the part that was accidentally dropped to the floor to ensure that the substrate wasn't damaged?

If your customer was always watching, would your shop floor be more organized? Would the team be more diligent about putting tools back where they belong?

If your customer was always watching, would your truck drivers handle the products with a little more care? Would your process control team make sure that any variables operating in the grey area were quickly brought into their optimal ranges? Would the maintenance team be less likely to cut a corner on their preventive maintenance programs?

"Character is doing what's right when nobody's looking."

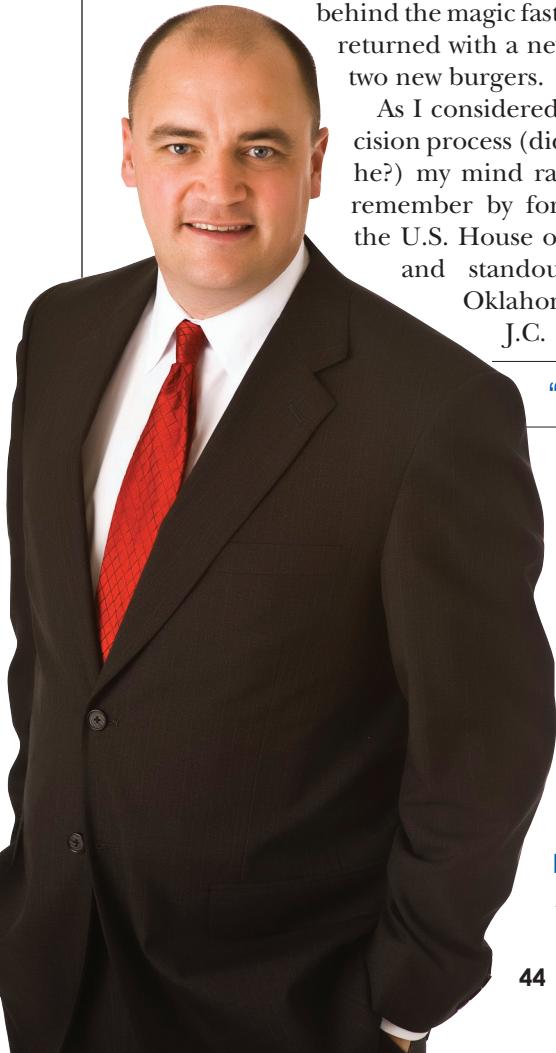
said, "Everyone tries to define this thing called Character. It's not hard. Character is doing what's right when nobody's looking."

One might wonder what a

If your customer was always watching, would the accounting team be more likely to bring attention to an overpayment, or an inaccurate invoice that overcharged the customer?

What about you? Would you clean up your language around the plant? Would you dress just a little more professionally every day? Would you treat your team members and suppliers with a little more respect ... all the time?

What would you do differently ... if your customer was always watching? ■



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