



Dear ARCSI Awards Committee,

Rachel Farquer has worked for my company for five years, the first two as a cleaner. She was a middle-of-the-pack cleaner. She was neither a rock star nor was she ever in any risk of losing her job. In 2010, she was pregnant with her 5th child, and once it became too hard for her to work in the field, we let her work in the office. We asked her to file the customer paperwork. This is something we had done many times. After just two hours (most people milked it all day long), she came into my office and told me "First, I am done. Second, whoever files around here cannot spell. I had to alphabetize the whole thing. Third, your filing system made no sense, so I added this new color coding system." I was impressed, so I kept giving her more tasks. She excelled at each, and before long, she literally took over the entire company. She does the hiring, firing, deals with clients, calculates payroll, and even signs checks.

I cannot describe adequately how proud I am of Rachel and how far she has grown as a person and a manager. The transformation I have seen in her life is an example to everyone around her. She had every reason not to succeed as much as she has, but she just continues to grow and excel.

One of the secrets to her success is her ability to both relate to the cleaners but also provide fair discipline to them. When I was managing the day-to-day operations of the company, I had a very hard time managing the employees. I went to college and came out of the corporate world. The employees felt I just did not understand their life and never could. No matter my expectations, my employees always felt they were unrealistic and grounded in a different world than theirs. Rachel does not have that problem. She lived the life they live. She cleaned houses and worked her way up. Over the years, I have heard her give several variations of this lecture, "Listen, if you want to compare sob stories, I will win. I had five kids by age 22, was divorced by 23 from a deadbeat that does not even see his kids, let alone pay child support. Let's not talk about the rest of my screwed up family. Do you know what helps pull your life together? A job. Show up to work on time, follow the systems we give you, keep the drama away. This can be a place of peace and stability in your life if you don't screw it up." I could never say that and have them understand.

Another story that shows why I am so impressed with her is from two years ago. For the first time, I left the country for a week and went to Europe with my wife and left Rachel in charge. I did not check email or call in. When I got back, I discovered she had fired her mother, who also worked for us. I told her she did not have to do that, she could have waited until I returned. Her response, "She no called, no showed. The policy is very clear what happens." I replied, "but it's your mom; you didn't need to do that." She said, "yes, it's my mom, and if anyone should have had my back in my first week alone and backed me up, it was her; instead, she undermined me in front of everyone." This woman is hard core. We still tell that story to every new hire to prove we are serious about fairly enforcing the rules; after all, she fired her own mom.

If not for the one-page limit, I could go on and on with all the great things Rachel has done. She created our employee motivation program, wrote our training programs, created an inventory tracking system, and a new way of hiring. She has improved nearly every system in the company in two short years. By every measure, the business is doing better. Employees stay longer; more cleaners make it through our training program. Client satisfaction is up and client loss rates are down by 50% since she took over. Supply costs are down and sales are up. And I did none of it. In five years, she made the transition from cleaner to office manager to general manager, and in 2014, she will move into a new role: business owner. She has been so successful that for the first time in 2014, she is going to open the first office of our company not 100% owned and managed by my family. She is going to be an equal partner in her own office of our company. We have no doubt she will succeed, and we only hope we can find someone who does even close to as well as she has done.

Derek Christian
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