

Guest Editorial

>> Dr. Richard L. Elgin, LS, PE

Aphorisms for the Surveyor

In place of my editorial in this issue, I thought our readers would enjoy these words of wisdom shared by Dr. Dick Elgin.

“For many years I have delivered to state surveyor association meetings a seminar on how to improve one’s surveying business. Its current revision is based on my 36 years of education, training, experience, buying then operating and growing then selling a surveying and engineering business, and all the accompanying highs and lows that go with a career in surveying. During those 36 years I have collected sayings applicable to operating a surveying/engineering business. I include them in my seminar handouts, and thought perhaps the readers of *The American Surveyor* would enjoy them as well.

“My only regret is that I did not keep track of the sources of some of these sayings. Some I’ve heard for years, yelled across our surveying office by my late father (with great emphasis and effect). Others I’ve read or heard and modified. Others I’m sure are quotes attributable to someone, but I don’t know which ones or to whom. To them the readers and I say ‘thanks for your insight and wisdom.’

- Call them before they call you.
- Under promise. Over deliver.
- Procrastination never solved a problem, it only made one get worse.
- You never get a second chance to make a first impression.
- People don’t contract for services with people they don’t know.
- Bad clients and bad projects go together.
- Surveyors are more trustworthy than their clients.
- If you don’t have much work, it’s not because you charge too much.
- Receivables older than 120 days are no longer receivables.
- If you don’t have time to do it right, when will you have time to do it over?
- The surveyor’s measurements don’t end up as complaints to the Licensing Board; miscommunications or lack of communication with the client do.
- When you offend someone in business they will tell ten people. Do a good job they will tell one.
- Never lose an existing client.
- There are good jobs and there are bad jobs. Trust your gut. Don’t do the bad jobs.
- I don’t know of a surveying company that failed due to charging too much.
- An organization’s morale flows from the top down.
- Character is what you are. Reputation is merely what others think you are.
- It’s what you learn after knowing it all that counts.
- A leader leads by example whether he knows it or not.
- Leadership is action, not position.
- Don’t meet problems as they come, anticipate them.

These nuggets of wisdom apply to business as well as to life. Enjoy and apply.” 

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2010 Vol. 7 No. 5
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The American Surveyor (ISSN 1548-2669) is published monthly by Cheves Media LLC. Editorial mailing address: 905 W. 7th St., #331, Frederick, MD 21701. Tel: (301) 620-0784.

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Subscriptions prices in the U.S.: Free for qualified professionals. Canada: 1 year \$56.00 US; international subscriptions \$72.00 per year (Airmail), U.S. funds prepaid. Back issues (subject to sufficient stock) are available for \$4.95 + S/H.

New subscription inquiries and all other address changes should be sent to *The American Surveyor*, P.O. Box 4162, Frederick, MD 21705-4162. Fax: 301-695-1538. Subscribe online @ www.amerisurv.com

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