



The 'Gate Test'

Asked by a 7th grader, "How can you tell a good country from a bad one?" William Bennett, former Secretary of Education and author of *The Book of Virtues*, uses the 'Gate Test.' Simply put: open the gates to a country and watch which way the people run.

As I see it, the 'Gate Test' for a GymClub is an attempt to get a pulse on your employee 'attraction factor' and 'stickiness factor.' In other words, to measure the health of your culture—the intangibles that attract and keep employees. To isolate culture, we must contrive a somewhat artificial situation since employees also have financial reasons as well as logistical/convenience reasons for their employment choices. Financial reasons might include: it is her sole source of support; he wants extra spending money; she is putting herself through college. Logistical or convenience reasons might include: proximity to her home; his child is on the team; the GymClub is near the university she attends.

The GymClub 'Gate Test.' First, in your mind's eye, disregard all financial and logistical/convenience reasons that your employees may have for staying employed at your GymClub (imagine a world where all food, clothing, shelter and transportation needs are provided free of charge). Also, imagine this world is absent of the various legalities, stigmas and loyalties that tend to dissuade people from switching jobs. Finally, pretend your market area is over-saturated with GymClubs, all vying for the same employees (that's not too hard to imagine, is it?).

The hypothetical scenario: (1) your GymClub exists in a world where employees' physical needs are provided for and an employee has no reason to accept or stay in a job other than to seek intellectual, emotional and spiritual gratification; (2) your market area is flooded with other GymClubs, yet there are plenty of students for all.

The question: which way would the employees run? Would employees flock to your doors...or sprint out? More likely, there would be no rush just a slow, steady migration so that month to month there would be no noticeable difference, but year after year the difference would be huge. On which side of the migration would your business be? Would the quality of your collective staff improve...or decline? After a decade of skirmishes would you win or lose the employee war?

If you would lose the war, drop every other project and seek serious change today, for this is the most serious of long term problems a business can face.

If you would win the war, raise the stakes and try again. Recall a GymClub that you admire deeply—a GymClub that really has things 'nailed' including: enthusiastic, responsible employees; smooth, efficient systems; consistently growing profit. Next, pretend all the GymClubs in your market are just like this one—even the one across the street! If you would still win the war, congratulations, your GymClub truly has a world-class culture.

Kids First Sports Center's Core Concept: Here at Kids First, we are best in the world at two things: (1) promoting responsibility through sport; (2) developing great leaders. Focusing on the second: developing great leaders is not an 'add-on.' For us, stretching employees' intellectual, emotional and spiritual boundaries is the essence of our existence. If we fail in this, we fail in total. I would like to think we would win the war.

Make it a great month. J

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