

The last time we were together I told you about the day my future son-in-law talked with me about marrying my oldest daughter, Emily. At that time I promised you that I would finish the story about telling you about the really fun part, Pete's proposal to Emily. After our little man to man talk about Pete becoming my future son-in-law, I promised him I would generally keep his discussion of marriage quiet until he was actually able to propose.

The actual proposal to Emily happened one week later when Pete actually asked Emily to be his wife. They say that girls eventually want to marry someone like their father and the way that Pete proposed to Emily definitely had a flair of my style. Pete led Emily on a scavenger hunt around Lawrence, Kansas, eventually leading to the church where the wedding will be and where he popped the question.

I know all this because he shared the itinerary with Emily who shared it with us. Let me tell you about it... The evening started out as I am guessing most Friday's do for Pete and Emily, out to eat at a favorite local Lawrence eatery. Pete excused himself to go to the bathroom, and never came back to the table! Instead, he had it worked out with a friend and the waitress so that the meal was paid for, and a clue was given to Emily to where she must go next.

In a "not so Tom like maneuver", Pete had enlisted the help of not less than 6 friends to help with the scavenger hunt and had everything timed down to the minute. He also enlisted the help of 7 additional people and local establishments in Lawrence to help with the fun. Pete had pre-paid for a little treat at each stop and had his car hidden near a clue with the keys available so that Emily could continue the hunt.

All the while, Pete had stationed friends at each establishment, watching in the background. Their job was to make sure Emily solved each riddle, and made it to the next destination at the prescribed time. The stops included the initial restaurant, a coffee shop, an art gallery, a bar that specializes in board games (where Emily had to solve a Scrabble clue), a frozen yogurt shop and 2 different churches.

As owners and managers of small businesses we rarely can run our businesses by ourselves. We need the help of others to be successful. The people who help us can either be great or mediocre. One of the reasons I believe the banks where I have worked have been successful is because of the other people that worked there. Henry Ford had the right idea when he doubled the average workers pay to \$5 a day. It was expensive at the time, but he reduced his turnover to minimal levels and had workers who really wanted to be there. Ford produced the highest number of cars for the lowest cost and made millions.

I am not saying that money is the only answer, having a great work environment and helping people grow in their jobs is also important. But the bottom line is, no matter how good you are, to be successful, you have to be surrounded by good people, and you must reward them appropriately.

When Emily arrived at the final destination 90 minutes after starting on her quest, Pete was waiting for her poised to ask the big question. When they went to another room, all the friends who helped with the big night were there to help celebrate. Good thing Emily said yes!

Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, president of First National Bank, Ankeny.