

ACHIEVING “OK” IS “GREAT” IN MARRIAGE

BY

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Ironworks Inc. and Acme Steel have been doing business together for twenty-five years. Ironworks manufactures steel widgets and Acme sells raw steel. These two companies have worked together for all this time for two basic reasons: 1. They need each other. 2. The money is right. Ironworks believes they are buying their raw materials at a reasonable price and Acme believes they are selling their steel at an acceptable price.

Since these companies are privately-held profit-making businesses, it is likely that they each desire to make increased profits. However, if Acme notifies Ironworks that next month the price per ton of steel will increase 50%, Ironworks may grudgingly make their next order but will immediately begin searching for a new supplier. By the same token, if Ironworks notifies Acme that next month they will only pay 50% less per ton of steel, Acme may reluctantly fill the next order but will immediately begin searching for a new customer. Thus, if either company substantially alters the price in their favor, a business relationship that had endured a quarter-century will collapse.

This analogy regarding these two companies closely relates to marriage: When the two companies conducted business with each other such that both were satisfied (not necessarily overjoyed) with the financial arrangement, the business relationship prospered. When either company attempted to seek a greater profit—a “win”—the relationship dissolved. Similarly, when couples interact in a spirit of compromise and cooperation the union flourishes. However, when one or both partners argues to “win,” frequently issues edicts or ultimatums, or threatens divorce if they don’t get their way, the marriage is threatened. Like the long-term business relationship between Ironworks Inc. and Acme Steel, marriage works best when each party strives for mutual satisfaction—not a personal win. Therefore, achieving “ok” in marriage is “great.”

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