

Mr Shaun Tolley

Loyalty today has like many important aspects of our life been diluted by a continuing apathetic or disinterested society. Loyalty in the twenty first century has been distilled down to having a nice shiny plastic card that can be handed over to a cashier upon the conclusion of your purchase at a participating outlet.

A loyalty reward system so the advertising leads us to believe, should make us feel good about brand and customer loyalty. In return we can achieve numerous benefits such as, air points, cheap fuel and fly buy points which all can be redeemed for any number of nice new products chosen from the comfort of your armchair.

This has a danger of twisting the way society looks upon the meaning of loyalty. Sub-consciously we can be interpreting it's meaning to be that of the reward offered, how much it will be and what can I get with it? Some can be confused by this type of loyalty and find it difficult not receiving any direct or tangible rewards for their efforts or involvement.

There are a few instances within Taekwon-Do where some have been heard to say, "I pay all this money to the organisation and feel my students and I get very little in return. " I do all this work and turn up to help at most events but feel I receive little praise".

These comments are of someone who expects to receive reward for showing loyalty to the Taekwon-Do brand.

Loyalty within Taekwon-do has a more concentrated structure. It can be likened to the loyalty felt towards ones family. Family loyalty can be built from trust, experience, leadership, direction, understanding, humility and patience. All these attributes can be found within Taekwon-do and help to build a strong sense of loyalty.

Loyalty is not a direct conclusion of any one or combination of accomplishments. It is not something that can be demanded or vigorously pursued. Loyalty to ones family, Taekwon-do or friends is made up of many shared experiences both positive and negative. It is how we interact with others and the discussions we make which concern or directly influence those people that will determine any shared loyalty.

Loyalty does not just live in the present with those that we come in contact with now but can also come from the past. Many of the events we remember fondly can influence and shape our present loyalties. Experiences which at the time may have been difficult but we look back now with a smile or of friends and acquaintances now passed and the experiences shared and remembered fondly.

It is the combination of all our life's experience and interactions that build loyalty for our self and from others. It can be very fragile and does not only increase but can also diminish. In a system of rank the highest ranking are looked upon to be able to show unwavering loyalty. This is not a job description, more a product of experience and knowledge.

If those at the top are not united in their efforts and loyal to the brand then any who follow have no direction or path and the system fails.

Loyalty is not a journey with a straight path and there is no final destination where you can sit down and say "yes I'm here". It can not be quantified by any ability to return a benefit to you. The experience and wisdom you receive from continued input and attention over an extended period of time will see a shift from, what can I get out of this to what can I do to make it keep happening so others may benefit as I have and can I make it any better for all those who follow?

True loyalty in Taekwon-Do, for both the Art and fellow students, derives from making a conscious effort away from practising what is taught as a sport, through to understanding the philosophy and finally incorporating the knowledge learnt as a way of life.

Shaun Tolley