



“30

—seconds to—
GREATNESS

cliff
QUICKSELL”

*To all my friends and colleagues who pushed me to
continue these efforts with your kind words and inspiration.
Thank You!*

*To my daughter Caitlin, son Alex, and my
loving, supportive, and incredibly funny wife Maria,
thanks for keeping me thinking young; I love you beyond words.*

Moe, you're the best.

*...and Dustin, I don't have the words to
express my sincere gratitude.*

Each of you, ALL OF YOU, made this possible!

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For over three decades, Cliff has been speaking, training and consulting internationally to associations and national business groups on more effective ways to market themselves and their products and services as well as how to motivate their personnel. Cliff has been the proud recipient of numerous awards. Recognized by PPAI for creativity, he has won the prestigious PPAI Golden Pyramid award 27 times. And the Printing Industry PSDA's Peak Award for creativity 5 times in two years. He has also received PPAI's Ambassador Speaker of the Year Award six consecutive years. And in

1997 he was the inaugural recipient of PPAI's Distinguished Service Award. In addition, in 2001, Cliff was named one of top six industry speakers and trainers and continues to be recognized as such. Cliff was featured as having a significant influence in education as published in the book, **PPAI at 100**. He has also been recognized by Counselor Magazine as one of the Top 50 Most Influential People in the Promotional Products Industry. His BLOG **30 Seconds to Greatness** received the Web Award for Most Passed Around Content.

FOREWORD

I've been in sales and marketing for over five decades. My first job, if you want to call it that, was folding over a thousand pizza boxes every Saturday. I was six years old. I was paid \$5 and a large pizza to take home to share with my family.

As I progressed through my sales career, I worked for an Anheuser-Busch distributor, fell in love and worked for a young lady whose father owned a promo company. We ramped that company up for three years until she decided she liked someone else. I was out of her life but not the industry. I started my own company; owned it for eleven years. After being close to bankruptcy nearly five times and having a large client default on invoices of over \$40,000.00, I decided to make good on my debts and dissolve the company.

I was hired at another distributorship and became tremendously focused. I began to understand sales and marketing through my own personal research; I became a student of education. I came to understand that to run and manage an effective, profitable business, I needed to focus and commit to making it work; it wouldn't happen on its own. During that time, I learned so much. To further my passion for education, I began speaking locally to different groups about the knowledge I had gained during my journey, evolving to where I am today.

Eventually I was asked to work for one of the largest firms in the Promo Industry and I took the opportunity – it was amazing. After four years, I was approached by a global supplier to become the CEO of their start-up in the United States. After getting that company up and running, I decided to sell my interest and do it again with another start-up. This too was challenging yet rewarding.

After I left that venture, I was coaching, consulting and speaking. This has evolved to where I am today. I have spoken to over 150,000 people, coached thousands of business owners and sales professionals in over seven countries around the world. Additionally, I have published nearly 1,200 articles for eight different publications in five countries. I have published three books, this book, 30 Seconds to Greatness being the third.

I continue to coach, consult, and speak. I have been with iPROMOTEu, one of the promotion industry's largest distributor firms for the last ten years and currently hold the position of Vice President of Marketing where I have the pleasure of working with many highly talented individuals.

Through the entirety of my career, I learned a great deal, and still do, every day. What I've come to realize is business owners, salespeople, staff, family and friends need to be lifted at times. They need motivation in this crazy, busy, fast-paced world. They need little pushes, little bites.

30 Seconds to Greatness is just that; those small bites of motivation or thought-provoking bits of information to get you thinking during the week. This book is not intended to be read in one sitting, rather each passage is to be read, absorbed, digested, applied, and shared weekly to help you achieve your own personal "GREATNESS." Each of you has it, talents that set you apart.

It's my hope that this book and my thoughts are, at some level, a catalyst for you to achieve your own greatness – it's in YOU!

Enjoy the read and I relish your comments!

TAKE

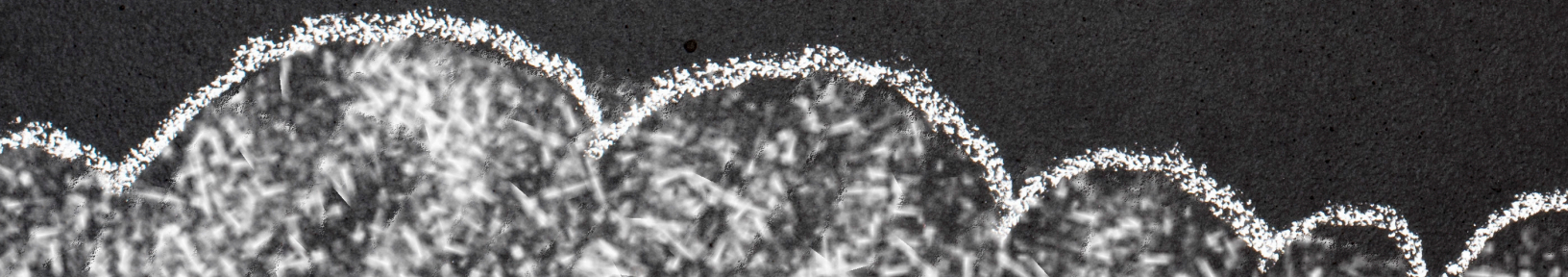
— 30 seconds to —

CLEAR

your
HEAD

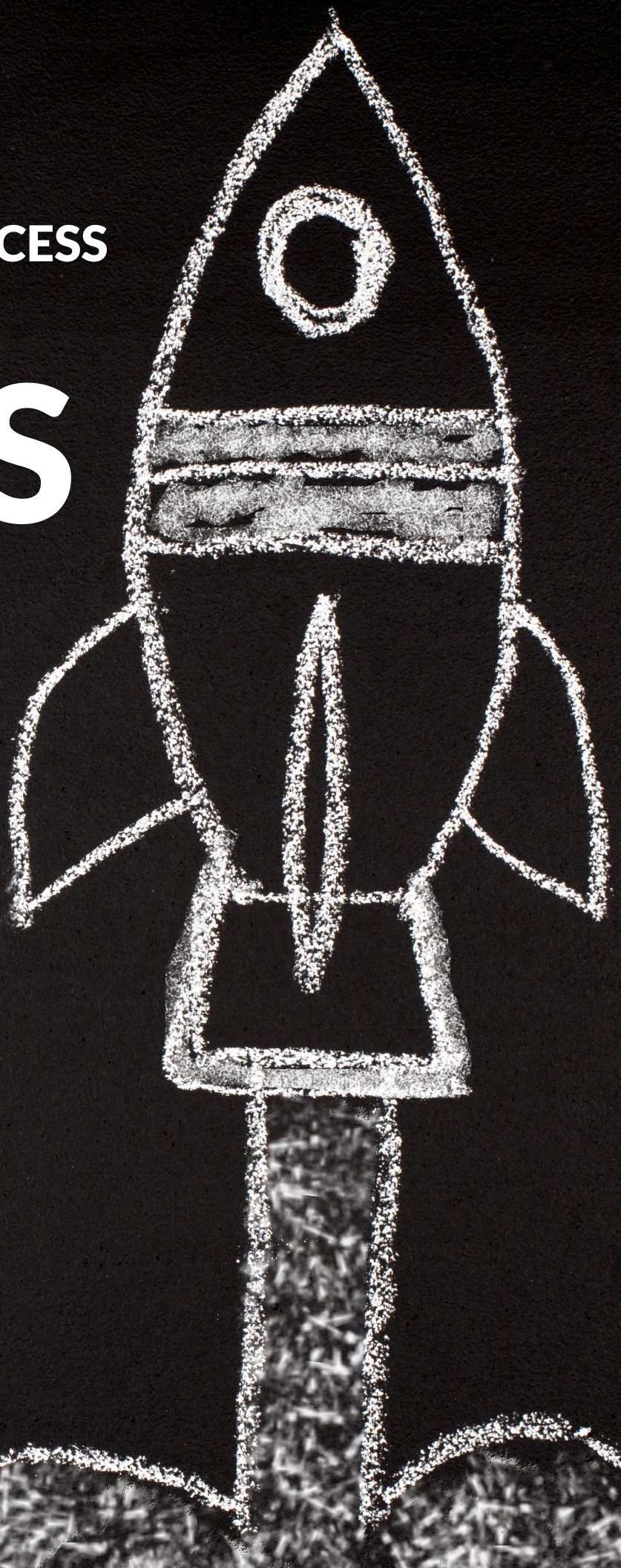


**30 SECONDS
TO GREAT**



**YOUR GUIDE TO
CONTINUED SUCCESS**

TNESS





“Feedback is the breakfast of champions.” - Ken Blanchard

Constructive criticism and positive feedback like “cash” is the lifeblood of any organization. The question is: Does your organization or company have a policy in place where it openly solicits constructive feedback and good ideas? How are individuals rewarded for their input?

Years ago a major airline implemented a program whereby they solicited ALL of their staff to give feedback and suggestions on how to make the airline streamlined and more profitable. Interestingly, a suggestion came from a very unlikely group of people. Seems as though the individuals who were removing the garbage and trash from the planes after they had landed (this is when they served meals regularly on flights) had noticed that the vast majority of plates being removed still had the olive garnish on the plate. After a careful examination on the repercussions of removing the olives from the menu, they did just that.

In the following year the airline, from that small reduction, realized a cost savings of over \$40,000.00....just from olives. Imagine that!

What in your organization could be streamlined? Could

you develop an internal program for your company? Or what about being proactive and developing a suggestion program for your clients where they could reward the “good ideas” with premiums? Given our economy, I know any company would relish a program that would help aid on saving money and at the same time build loyalty and camaraderie.

Put on your thinking caps, folks. Opportunities are just waiting for you IF you’re thinking!

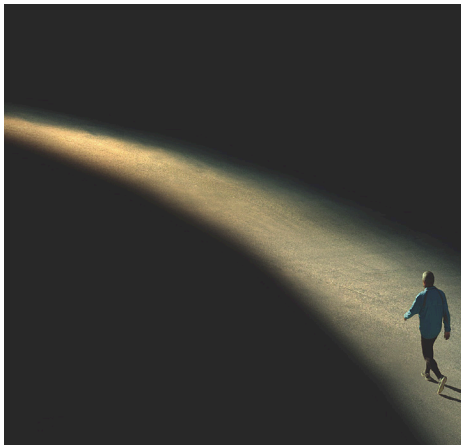
“Why does the thrill of soaring have to begin with the fear of falling?” -Mother Eagle

When I saw this quote, I was truly taken aback. It reminded me of Marianne Williamson’s quote of “Our Greatest Fear”. In her rendition she says that our greatest fear is “...not the darkness, but our light...”. I truly believe that many of us are very afraid of what we could accomplish if we let go of our fears. It is so true, our fears are what encumbers us from our potential greatness. I see this so often when I do seminars focused on creativity – folks with a great idea, or potentially great idea, will not participate or share because they “fear” failure. We fear the other person will laugh or find our idea stupid.

Your ability to achieve is far greater than you give yourselves credit. Just think, you could accomplish ANYTHING if you believe. It all begins with YOU! And letting go of that fear and embracing the inevitable, the reality that YOU WILL INDEED fail and that it’s ok, will spawn greatness in YOU and those around you.

When Thomas Edison was on his quest to invent the light bulb, he FAILED, as one reporter stated, at 1,700 attempts to create the light bulb. When the reporter asked him how he felt about all of his failures, he responded, “...I have now figured out 1,700 ways how NOT to make a light bulb...” – so you see, it’s ALL about the way you view situations.

As you begin the ensuing days, months, and years, remember this: Write it down. Instill this in every salesperson and coworker in your organization, your children, families. Talk about it and see the benefits of letting go and jumping out of the comfort of your nest. Soar to greatness. I believe you can!





“You get the best efforts from others not by lighting a fire beneath them, but by building a fire within.” - Bob Nelson

There are many in business and in life that feel the need to rule or “motivate” through force and intimidation. The reality, that tactic is really no way to build strong, successful, and loyal companies or friends. I have worked for such individuals, and the experience was awful. On the other hand, I have worked for and with individuals who patiently helped me develop my interests and “passion” for what I do, whether it be sports, business, or life itself. That passion and fire becomes infectious to everyone I now touch.

Are you the type to train and build your team through loud, nasty intimidation tactics? How receptive are those on the receiving end? If polled, what would they say about you and your management style?

Ask your team or yourself, if you’re a one- or two-person business, am I passionate about what I do? Do others see my passion and emulate that drive?

Now is the time to take an introspective look at what it is you do, how you train and motivate those around you. Stoking the fire of passion inside your team will ultimately mean greater loyalty, better sales, cohesive work environment, and a happier life. Now is the time for change!



“Creativity is the power to connect the seemingly unconnected.” - William Plomer

People often ask me, “...what is creativity?” Some years back my daughter, who is very creative, asked me the same question, and my response was: “Cait, creativity is taking what someone has made or created and looking at it differently...”

There have been many definitions to describe creativity, but the one connected with this blog speaks volumes. Your ability to create something from what is not there is what will separate you from the mundane competition. When asked what you do, your response is “I sell promotional products;” That, in itself, IS NOT creative. Many people have a hard time getting their arms around this; but when you do, you will harness what has eluded many in this industry.

Clients today are looking for something different, not just a different pen or executive gift. They are looking to create a “significant point of difference” – in a word, engagement. In order to survive in this business in the ensuing decade, you MUST change the way you view yourself in this space.

Take a moment to look at yourself like a chef or a musician, taking and placing notes on a page or ingredients in a pan. You take the resources at your disposal and create magic – if you believe that you do, you do. If you don't, then, well, you just don't.

Connect the dots, create magic, and watch a plethora of new opportunities unfold in front of you.

“You have energy. Where should it be invested?” - Sam Parker

Energy,time management – call it what you will. How wisely do you invest your time? Years ago when I owned my headwear company, we began the launch with only five employees, all highly qualified, all anxious to make a difference. After about six months, we were tracking along as any new company dealing with and having struggles. A couple of the employees came to me, one in particular, and said, ‘...we are too busy, we’re overloaded, we need additional help...’

At the time, the company was doing roughly six to seven thousand dollars a month, and it was apparent to me that our energies were not focused. So one by one I analyzed what each person was doing throughout the course of the day and then set out on a goal to help them manage their time (energies) where it was most needed and most effective.

After the exercise had been completed, my office manager, who shouldered the majority of the responsibility for many tasks, found she had nearly three and one quarter hours of ‘displaced time’ or energies that were being misdirected. I helped her with scheduling her time, and she became highly productive. Those same five people became so effective that, when we were doing \$150,000 in sales per month, they were astonished with what they had accomplished.

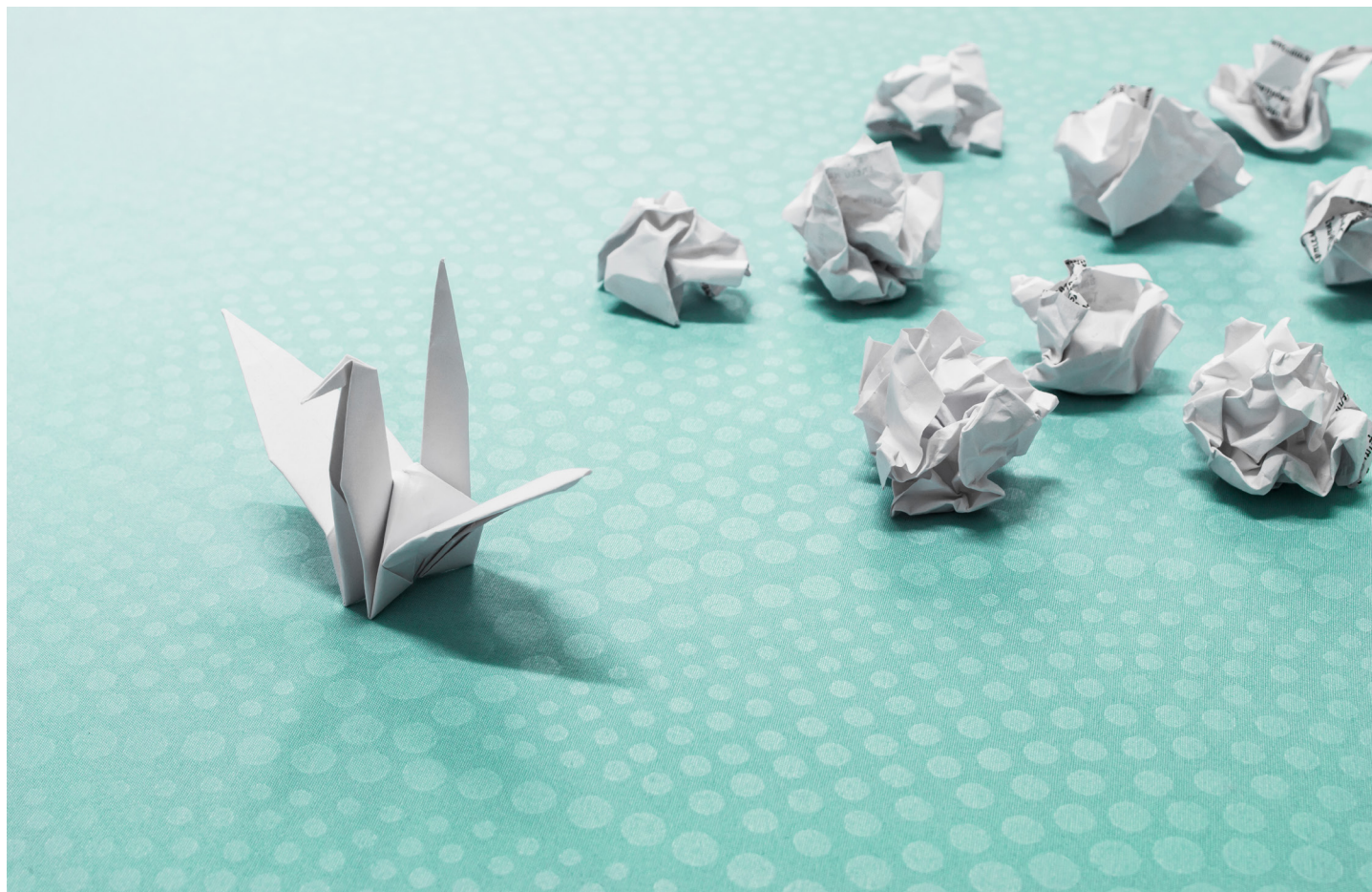
It is important to regularly review what you are doing and how you are expending your energy. Ask these simple questions: The clients we work with, are they profitable? Are they appreciative of our efforts? Do they pay their bills on time?

Where do you invest your time and energy?

Revaluate regularly. Doing so will free up so much time, time that will help you be more productive and profitable. You’ll be amazed.



“...I fail every single day of my life... and that’s what makes me great!” - Michael Jordan



Failure is oftentimes looked at as a bad thing, but failing is inevitable. Michael Jordan, who many would say is the greatest basketball player, maybe even the great athlete ever, had failures, yet he considered himself excellent at what he did – even great! As you ponder his quote, think about all of the missed shots, missed picks (blocking out in basketball), or missed passes that he “didn’t make” – failures, but he was great! The thing about Jordan is that he was a “student” of the game. He watched, listened to his coaches/mentors, and – here’s the catch – learned from the mistakes.

We all fail. It is inevitable. Yet the lessons we take away from those failures are invaluable. You may

make the wrong decision on a color, forget to put a charge on your invoice that costs you plenty. You may even say something that causes a coworker or client to take offense. These things happen. When brought to your attention, the key is to be open to what happened and to be teachable or, better yet, “coachable” in ways to rectify the issue.

As you progress through both your professional and personal life, recognize that failures are indeed part of growth. Embrace this notion and look for the silver lining in the process. That silver lining is in the learning from the mistake. That’s what makes you stronger! That’s what makes you great! Also, be patient with others that make mistakes and

fail. Be a source of encouragement. Help them see that silver lining. Help them attain greatness too. In doing so, you make your organization, your community, your country, and the world great.

Start today, shake off the stigma that failures are bad – embrace the lessons, and enjoy the success that comes from learning.

“If you want to increase your success rate, double your failure rate.” -Thomas Watson, Sr., founder of IBM

To most, failing is a bad thing. And I guess if you look at the glass as being half empty, well, then you're right. If you look at all the successes throughout history, very few had zero failures.

The challenge is to “LEARN” from the failures! All the greats, be it actors, athletes, scientists, lawyers, doctors, carpenters, promotional marketers, ALL have experienced failures.

I think back to my college days when I was doing a paper on Thomas Edison. Edison was so convinced in his idea of the light bulb that he worked on it for thousands of hours, he believed. Right before he made his discovery, he was interviewed by a local news reporter. It was reported that he was asked the question, “Mr. Edison, how does it feel to have failed so many times regarding your invention?” Edison's response was perfect: “Sir, I have not failed. I have just discovered over 1,700 ways NOT to make a light bulb!”

That's right, over 1,700 failures in order to achieve a goal. How soon will you give up? How often do you find that

you stop short of your goal? How far are you willing to push yourself to make your business thrive? How often are you willing to fail?

During my tenure as a business owner, I nearly went bankrupt five times. I know the pangs of failure and staring failure in the face. I learned long ago that you must learn from each failure, ask for help when needed, be willing to fail and then fail again.

Support people within your organization. Be kind to yourself and know that when you fail – and you will – you are just one more light bulb closer to the prize.

Don't ignore your failures. Embrace them and learn from each of them. Doing so will increase your success. Weird I know...but true!





“Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.” - Joseph Addison

It's imperative to exercise your mental muscle, otherwise the mind becomes weak and atrophied. I make it a rule to read at least one book and around eighteen trade journals a month, along with countless articles and blogs from the internet. The information that is available is endless; and furthermore, it's free in most cases, just sitting there – yours for the taking!

I am surprised at how many of my peers do not make reading a “part” of their business lives. There is so much to learn. I for one am a student of education; I love to learn. I want to know how things are made or printed or put together. What was in the designer's head? What made the designer think to design a certain thing? What was the impetus behind the discovery?

Also, it is important not to become stale in your reading. Reading only about things in your respective industry is not enough – reach out beyond the boundaries of your business. What industries touch yours? What's happening in those industries positively and/or negatively that affect

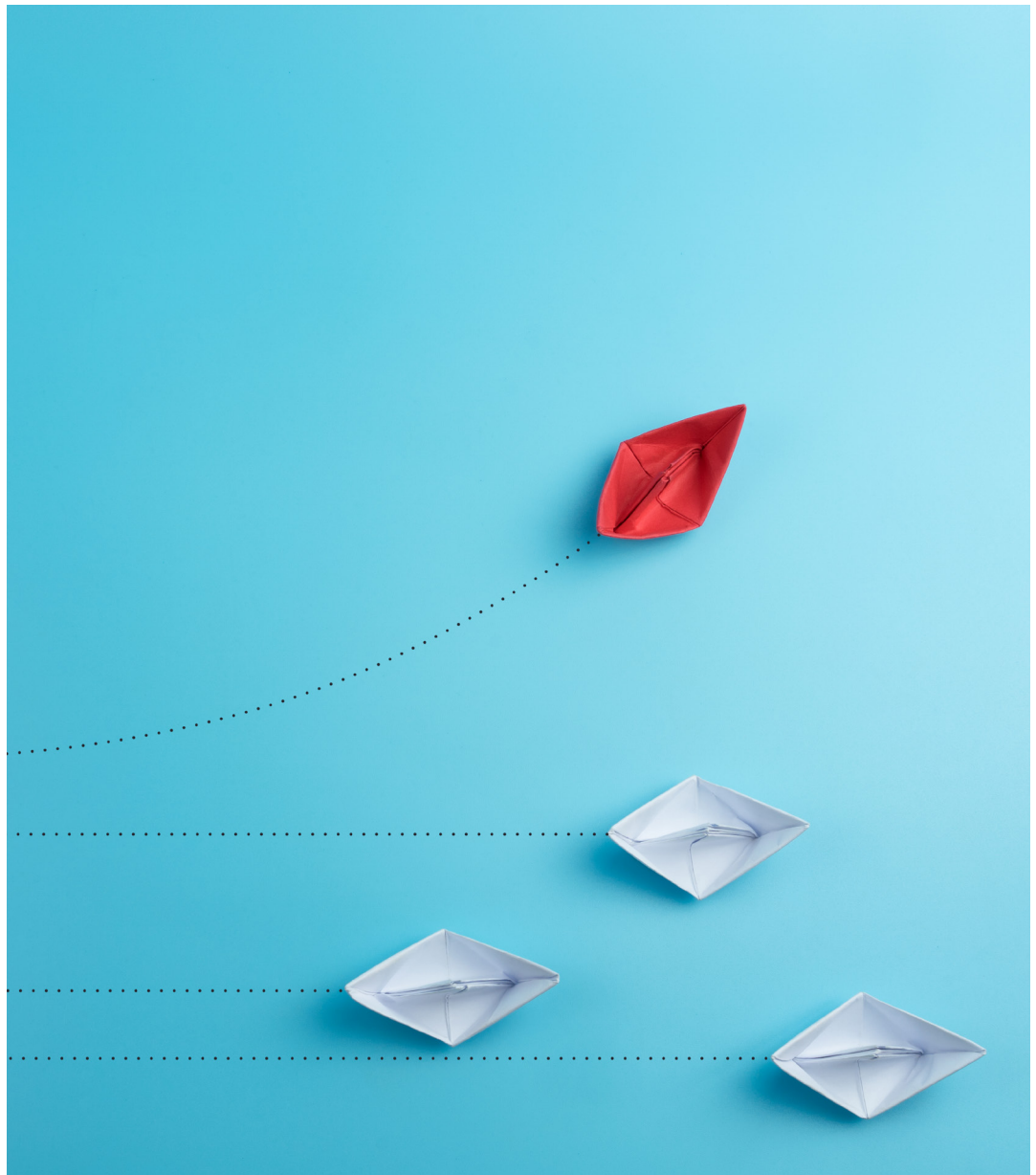
yours? What changes are coming down the road, and how will it impact your business?

There is so much to learn, and it changes daily. It is important for you to make reading very much a part of your daily business lives. Like exercise for your body, reading twenty minutes a day will keep your mind sharp, toned, and in shape.

Make it a part of your sales meetings and family experience – everyone MUST bring something interesting that they've learned or read that will benefit the group. Doing so will create incredible dynamics in your organization.

And like physical exercise...NO EXCUSES, just DO IT!

“Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.” - Emerson



Being different nowadays is more important than ever to create a significant point of differentiation. Regardless of your business model, there are a plethora of competitors all vying for the same business. And yet the pie of opportunity is not increasing, so why should I buy from you?

When you market your company, what is your unique selling proposition? Please do not say customer service. That should be a given! What makes you different? What sets your company apart? When was the last time you looked at what you are saying verbally and what you are articulating through

your website, print collateral, your email signature, and even your answering machine message? What does it say about you? Is it a consistent message?

If a coworker at your office were asked, “What is it that you do?”, would your message be consistent with theirs and visa-versa?

Are you a catalog pusher, the balloon guy, the t-shirt lady? Hopefully not! The clients that we deal with daily are becoming savvier and in many cases, more in tune with our marketplace than we are, all because of the Internet.

So, blaze a trail of difference when it comes to your marketing – blaze a trail of creativity, innovation, and measurable results. Yes, YOU CREATE your path and blaze the trail of your own success.

You are in control. You can make a difference. And only YOU can be the catalyst of change within your business. Imagine if everyone took that responsibility – how incredibly powerful our industry would/could be.

Blaze your own trail of success. The profitability on the other side will astound you!



**“Unless
commitment
is made,
there are
only
promises →
and
hopes...
but no
plans.”**

- Peter F. Drucker

Business is tough! Yet there are some that I know and work with that are literally turning away business. I have a client/friend in Canada that tells me that they have retooled the way they “think” and the way they “do” things with their company. That transition has netted this gentleman six National Advertising Awards in Canada. More importantly, it has netted him the respect and attention of the business community, whereby he is now the go-to person on many levels when it comes to the development and implementation of strategic marketing. But it took a mind shift, a “commitment” on his behalf for that change to take place. You too can do this!

My dear friends, trust when I tell you downturns are temporary. The pendulum will swing the other direction, but my thought is, when it does swing, it will swing differently. Clients, as I have always said, are and will continue to be more in tune with the innovative power of our medium. They are requiring more from us, as they are having greater demands placed on them by their superiors. They

are looking for key alliances that can help them grow their businesses.

When it comes to your marketing, you CANNOT just hand out a pen or a coffee mug ANY LONGER. It says, ‘...I sell stuff...’ and frankly, I can get stuff anywhere. I don’t need you! Make a commitment to market yourself differently, show clients your innovation – let them see the real power of the medium.

Develop a strong strategic “plan” and make a “commitment” to grow your business in a more positive manner. Become that strategic partner that clients are not only looking for but one that they are willing to PAY for.

Create a plan – be committed and dedicated to implement and relentlessly stick to that plan. Doing so will reap rewards beyond your imagination!

It’s all about the plan...and the commitment to that plan. Wish no longer – DO SOMETHING. It’s up to YOU!



Have you ever known someone that just cannot let go of an issue even after it has been resolved? How frustrating for you and, worse yet, how stressful and unproductive for them.

Situations arise in business every day, some good, some not so good, yet the bottom line is to get to a resolution that works for everyone and, once that resolution has been achieved, let it go!

Life is so short, and negativity and bad feelings should not consume your life – whether it be business or personal. If you are dealing or have dealt with someone that is not what

you would deem a good person, then get resolution and move on. Don't harbor ill will. It can only consume your productive thoughts and make your life miserable.

Several years ago, I had an issue with a supplier whereby they mis-shipped an order and were very pious about the issue. They resolved it, but it was painful. I got the resolution I needed, satisfied the client, and then made a conscious decision NEVER to do business with them again and let go. And then there have been issues with others whereby they made big mistakes, made good on the mistake, and we still do business together. They were receptive, determined

to make it right, and stood up and made it happen. We forgot about the past mistakes and moved on.

Same thing holds true when working with peers in the office. Holding on to animosity only breeds contempt and a very negative working environment. Sit down, discuss, resolve, and move forward. As indicated by the proverb below, when you hold on to anger, YOU are the only one who gets burned.

Let go of frustration and anger. In the long run, you are the only one that loses. Review, resolve, and renew – get productive!

“Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else. YOU are the one who gets burned.” - Gautama Buddha



“The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.” - Walt Disney

One of the biggest killers of ideas and progress is procrastination. It is a sickness, indeed a disease in business. Now there is something to be said about thinking through a process, both micro and macro. What I mean by this is thinking about the challenge and how the decision you make will affect the outcome both “micro” (short term) and “macro” (long term). The biggest challenge is many get paralyzed in the process - delays, meetings, approvals, committees. We’ve all seen it happen. The bottom line is to ‘...quit talking and begin doing’.

I have found that one of the biggest neglects of most businesses, regardless of what they do, is how they vacillate with their creative marketing. People always ask me how is it that you are so creative, and when do you find the time to sit and think of those ideas and concepts? First off, I do not hold the “HOLY GRAIL” of ideas. I have, however, trained myself to ALWAYS be in the mode of “doing.” So whenever I’m at a show, I am proactively looking, putting ideas and thoughts together, asking questions, bouncing ideas off people I trust, and trying to formulate creative solutions for both myself and my clients. I live this! I teach this!

So I encourage you, regarding all things in your business, do not look at each challenge and project as overwhelming and grandiose. However, eat the proverbial elephant one bite at a time, break it down in smaller bites, and begin. You’ll be amazed at how much you get accomplished. Whether it be hiring staff, working on a quote, filing catalogs, doing your billing, or creating creative marketing – whatever the challenge, remember the words of Walt Disney...

“The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.”

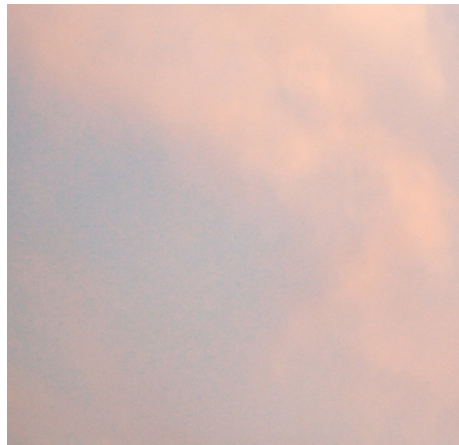
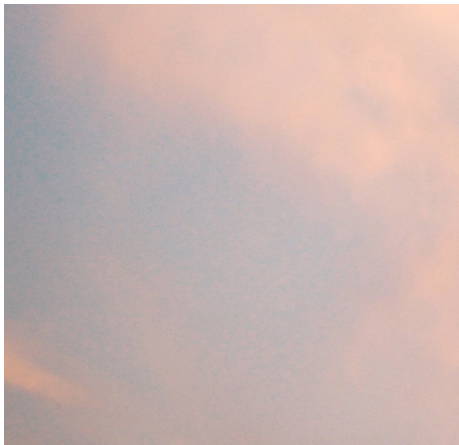
“Find a purpose, and your passion will follow.” -Mac Anderson

It is truly amazing! Have you ever seen someone doing something they are so passionate about? It's infectious and contagious! We often have a tendency to live our lives in what I call 'complacency mode,' doing things every day the same way – over and over – praying that things will change. And oftentimes, well, most times they don't. It takes YOU to make a stand and make a change. No one can do it for you.

Ask yourself the following: “If money didn't matter in life, what would I be passionate about doing?” If you can answer that, look at ways of infusing bits and pieces of what it is you love to do, what gives you purpose and cause. This is very fulfilling. This helps

fuel what's most important in my life.

Develop a purposeful life; visualize yourself doing what it is that gives you purpose, and that passion will certainly follow.





“Here is a simple but powerful rule: Always give people more than what they expect to get.” - Unknown

First, establish joint expectations with your clients, friends, whomever. Regardless if the relationship is business or personal, meeting expectations is imperative. Exceeding those expectations is what you should shoot for.

This being said, be sure never to overpromise, especially if it's to gain in a personal way. From the sales side, I've seen too many people promise the world – knowing that it would be a stretch to accomplish what they have committed.

You are going to fail, even with the best intentions, but don't purposely set yourself up for that failure. Doing so could let your team down, your client or friend down, and create potential division and doubt about your ability to come through in the future.

Under-promise and overdeliver, strive for greatness in this area of your life – it will never fail you.



**“What happens when you believe something with all your heart?
Belief fuels enthusiasm, and determined
enthusiasm explodes into passion.**

It fires our souls and lifts our spirits.” - Mac Anderson

I often ask people, during my seminars, if they love what they do. Then I inquire more deeply by asking do you have a passion for what you do. Regardless of your line of work, those that are passionate about what they do are happier, more grounded, and project a positive aura that makes folks stop and take notice and want to be engaged.

Is this YOU?

Friends, family, and business associates truly enjoy being around someone that is upbeat and positive. These types of individuals have a certain magnetism that draws people to them. These are the folks that, when they walk into a room, have no need to be loud and announce their arrival. They just show up.

This personality type generates positive energy where ‘everyone’ benefits. It reminds me of another quote that

states: “A rising tide lifts all ships.”

As you embark on this week’s activities, live with passion about all you do, everyone you meet, everything you touch – that passion will be infectious, and that’s a GREAT “bug” to spread.

“I always tried to turn every disaster into an opportunity.”

- John D. Rockefeller

We are beset with challenges every day with our businesses and personal lives – some great, some trivial, but challenges nonetheless. How we cope and deal with these challenges is what tests our integrity, grit, and tenacity as human beings and business professionals.

Some say, ‘I am consistently faced with one challenge after another, the burden is too great to bare, I can’t continue...’; however, I am here to tell you that you are much stronger than you give yourself credit.

The next time you’re confronted with a challenge/disaster, stop for a moment and think through the process.

- How will the decision I make now affect me long-term and vice-versa? How can the lesson benefit others?
- Have I ever been in this situation before? What were the outcomes?
- What did I learn? How could I help others with this same problem?

The challenges and problems that I have faced over my tenure in business have helped launch a very successful career in speaking and consulting. The knowledge I’ve gained helps flatten the learning curve and genuinely helps my clients run more successful and profitable companies!

Each challenge you face today will make you stronger in the future, giving you the ability to help your clients with better ways of achieving measurable goals, saving them time and money, thus paving a smoother path to success, while building credibility and loyalty along the way.

It’s how you look at the ‘glass’ I guess; half empty or half full. Make the best of it!



“Taking time for yourself should never be seen as a burden. Not on you, and not on anyone else.” - Elizabeth Franklin



Burnout is one of the biggest problems business owners, salespeople, and staff face on a daily basis.

When was the last time you did something for yourself?

Many people feel that they need to ‘strike while the iron is hot,’ but guess what? The earth will NOT cease to spin if you don’t check your email for an hour. I have known people that have gone on vacation and are SO consumed with having to check email and calling the office that they don’t fully enjoy themselves. Tragic! While it’s true you must take care of business, you MUST take care of YOU too. You are your business, and without you, there is NO business.

This holds true whether you’re an owner, salesperson, or staff.

Make it a habit each day to do something for yourself, be it walking, reading, going to the gym, writing, whatever. Make some “me time” and put it in your calendar and DO IT! Also make time for more extended jaunts and mini vacations. It could be a retreat to the mountains, a weekend at the beach, or a trip to a museum. Just DO IT! And encourage everyone who works with you to do the same. You’ll be amazed at the new perspective you’ll gain.

I plan small mini vacations once a month; I work out almost every day. These little respites give me more energy, a clearer mind and

perspective of what needs to be accomplished, AND it makes me happier and healthier. Isn’t that what life is all about – enjoying it ALL?

Never let anyone intimidate you into feeling that taking time for yourself in some way makes you a slacker or lazy. I had a friend a few years back that boasted he worked 80 to 90 hours a week and never took a vacation. He passed away at forty-five – stress related they say...sad!

Take time for you NOW. The benefits are far-reaching. Your clients, your friends, and your family will experience a happier, more enthusiastic and better YOU. All will benefit. You’re worth it. Start today – share with a friend!

“Whenever you do a thing, act as if all the world were watching.” -Thomas Jefferson

Whatever you do, whatever you say speaks volumes of who you are as a person, both personally and professionally. You are on stage pretty much 24/7. Your actions, comments, behavior, attitude, and demeanor can either raise you up or cause you to crash. You're in complete control of YOU!

It makes me think of Michael Phelps, the greatest Olympic swimmer ever, when he, while having “fun” at a party, probably unbeknownst to him, had a picture taken while indulging in smoking pot. Perhaps for some, not a big deal, but that one millisecond, along with an opportunist on a mission, cost him MILLIONS in endorsements. Now, regardless of your views on this, his sponsors found it unconscionable, and he lost out on a huge opportunity... and all the gold medals in the world couldn't change that.

I find myself recanting that story to my son and daughter. Now that they are older, they are now accountable. No longer can mommy and daddy be there to bail them out. They must do what is right and either shine or suffer the consequences for their actions. So think before you act. What you do or say today may haunt you later!

Years ago, there was a commercial on television that depicted several people doing jobs along a busy downtown street, a street cleaner, a shop owner, a truck driver, police officer. After the street sweeper swept the street, he bent over and signed the curb with his signature. I never forgot that commercial. I remember it distinctly, and it was over decades ago. It made me realize that there was something about work and personal ethics that made sense. In order to be successful, one must be willing to be accountable and “sign their name” and take ownership of their actions.

At the end of the day ultimately, YOU are the only person you have to answer to. So before you send that email, finish that piece of artwork, or file that last catalog, would you be willing to sign your name to that activity? Would you be proud of the job you just completed? Would you be comfortable if the world **were** watching?

Stay focused, be passionate about what you do. Whatever it is, every person within a business plays a role. And each role, if done with pride of ownership, keeps the organization flowing, productive, and profitable.





“Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.” - Japanese Proverb

- * Next week I'm going to...
- * I have to start that marketing program...
- * If only I could...

Sound familiar? We begin daydreaming about what we “coulda, shoulda, woulda” do, and yet nothing happens. We build these foundations of great ideas and things we need to do to make our business and personal lives more alive and productive, yet we fail to build on them. Much like a contractor that has started a community, dug and poured the foundation, and has lost his funding. Weeds grow up, completely unfinished – an eyesore.

The challenge for most people is we try and take on too much. We set our goals so lofty that they are often impossible to reach, or we shoot for the stars before really thinking about what it is we really want to accomplish. For instance, the people that place this magical notion in people’s heads about being a million-dollar producer – it’s hogwash! What about selling 600,000 at a 60% margin instead of the one million at the 29% industry

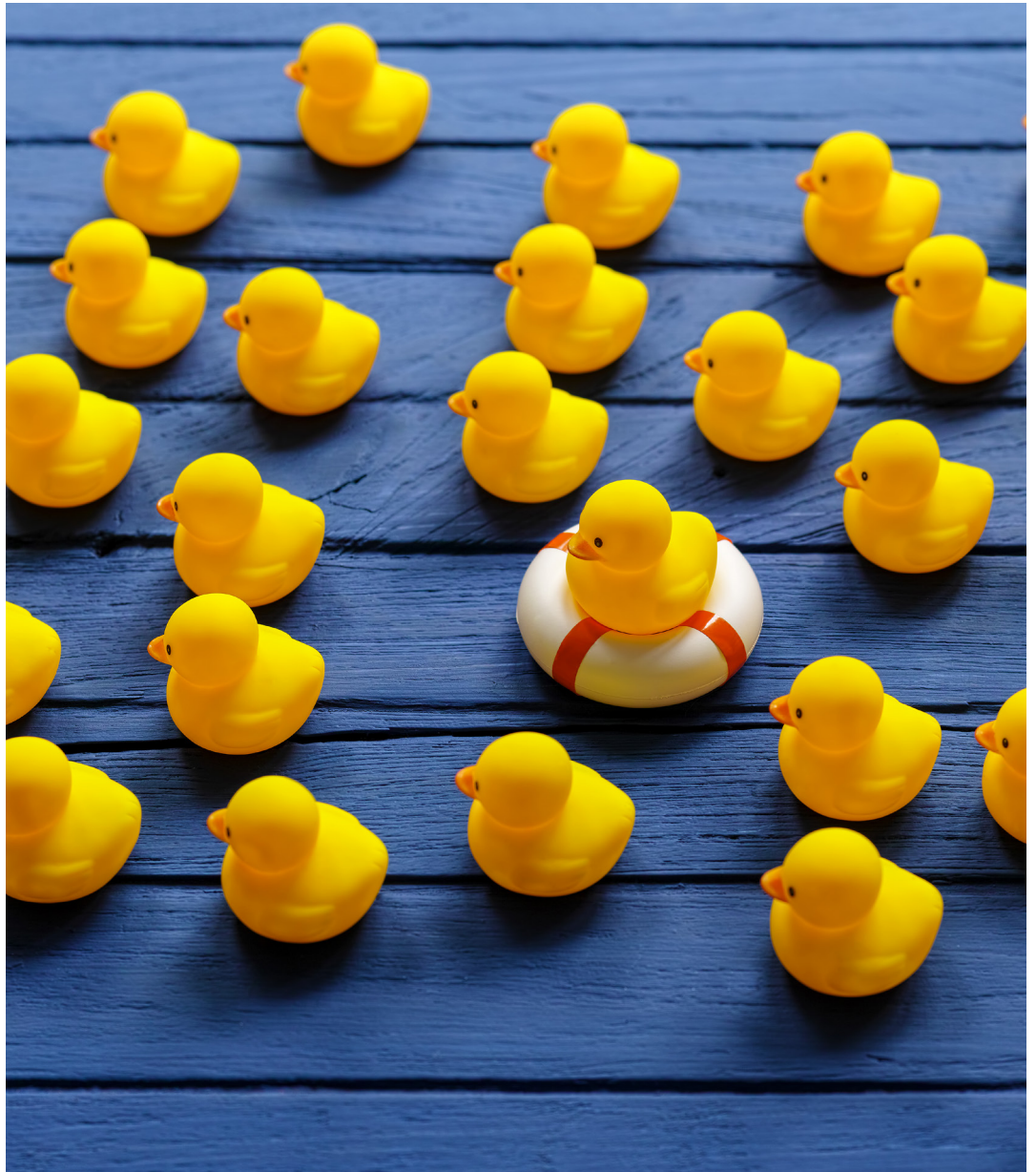
average? Who made more money?? Being a million-dollar producer is GREAT but not if it’s unprofitable!

Whatever your desire, set goals, but ensure they are realistic. We became a society of glut. Business ten years ago just seemed to flow, but as the pendulum swings back, things are different. YOU need to be different.

Look at the things you want to accomplish by the end of the next year, make a list and prioritize – take each “vision” and act on it. Do not pick up on another until you have truly exhausted the first. It could be sending out that next creative marketing piece and following through with each recipient. Or it may be writing that first book, or article. Remember, it begins with a thought, a vision – your vision.

Think it through, create a plan and execute. You’ll be happy with the results if you do as suggested.

**“Imagination
is more
important
than
knowledge.
While
knowledge
is important,
imagination
embraces
the world.”
- Albert Einstein**



Imagination – undoubtedly one of the most underutilized tools in our creative arsenal. Imagination is the embodiment of thinking outside the box, with no rules, no limitations, and zero restrictions – thinking like a child.

Statically it has been reported that from birth to age six over 96%, the things children imagine or think about are innovative, new, and creative. Contrary and sadly I might add, as an adult, at age forty, only 4% of our ideas are imaginative, innovative, and creative. What happened, and where did we go awry?

As we grow up, we are bombarded and taught by teachers and parents alike that we must do things right, one way, so we don't cause drama or buck the system. If a child sees an early morning sky as purple, why then would some art teachers insist that the sky is blue?

Your clients are looking at ways to differentiate, as should you. They ask you every day for something new, different, and exciting – a new idea. And given the fact that we think at about an average 20% innovation level, we're already at a deficit.

Imagine for a moment if we had ten fingers on each hand. How would

our lives be different? What would computer keyboards look like? What about instruments? What type of melodies, tones, and sounds could be created IF we could utilize more than ten digits? Think about that!

Before you say, “Ah, I've got it, imagine it another way. Ask yourself “What IF?” Think like a kid again when developing a creative program for yourself or a client or even if you're trying to solve a problem. The imagination is powerful. Let go and “...embrace the world”



“The bad news is time flies... The good news is you’re the pilot.”

- Michael Altshuler

There are very few constants in our lives, and time is one of them. We cannot stop it, control it, or harness it. We can capture moments in time by archiving our thoughts with the written word, photos, and video. We can reflect on those times and reminisce, but the reality is when that time passes, it’s gone.

Time can be equated to opportunity. How much time (opportunity) has blown away? How many times have you said “...woulda, shoulda, coulda done something?” Yes, oftentimes, many times, we allow opportunities to merely slip away because we don’t take control and make decisions. You ARE the pilot of your life; you have choices. YOU, nine times out of ten, can direct where you go and how you arrive.

- When was the time you said in hindsight, ‘wow, I should have done that’...why didn’t you?
- How often have you NOT taken the initiative or made excuses for not making that one last phone

call or sales call on Friday afternoon?

In each of those situations, you were the driving force behind that decision – you were the pilot. What prevents you from going the distance, making the right choice, making the next call, sending that next thank you, or just telling someone in your life, whether a client, coworker, friend, or family member, “hey, you make a difference being in my life.”

The ‘good news’ is that you are indeed the pilot – so take control of your life, your decisions – pick up the phone, make a call and tell a friend, client, or loved one how important they are to you!

Make the best of your time...every day – you’re the pilot!



If you want to watch one of the most inspiring movies that depicts true drive, determination, and success, a movie that shows what hard work CAN accomplish, then watch the movie "Miracle" starring Kurt Russell. This emotionally-inspiring movie is a step-by-step chronicle of Herb Brooks, 1980 Olympic Hockey coach, and how he took a group of twenty-six undisciplined players and molded them into a unified group to realize an impossible dream by beating the Soviet Union (at that time seemingly unbeatable) to win the Gold Medal at the 1980 Olympics Games. Probably one of the greatest moments in all sports history!

Herb Brooks' dream began extremely rocky, with the entire Olympic Hockey Committee against his decision to revamp the US Olympic Hockey program and then taking a handful

of hand-picked college players and molding them into a group of young men that could achieve what was believed to be the unachievable. People thought he was crazy, yet he did the seemingly impossible. And how was that done? It was done with believing first in himself, his dream, and his team. And with that vision, direction, complete determination and persistence, success was realized.

Seems as if there are many parallels in life, sports, relationships (business and personal), yet, while somewhat different, the lessons are the same. Regardless if you are a one-person company or part of a larger firm (team), it takes several characteristics to become successful:

- **Belief** – change your mindset to one of "I can do this!"

- **Focus** – vision - never take your eye off the goal.
- **Balance** – keeping everything (family, career, health) in sync.
- **Determination** – direction - never stop working toward your goals.
- **Persistence** – when things seem the worst, reach deep within...again and again!

When you watch this movie, it will truly inspire and move you like no other. The life lessons are real and applicable to every aspect of business – and LIFE. And while a very rocky start for Herb Brooks and his team, the most important thing was the finish. Inspiring!

“Great beginnings are not as important as the way one finishes.” - Dr. James Dobson



“In the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility.” - Eleanor Roosevelt

‘The process never ends...’ We constantly need to be looking for ways to shape our lives and reinvent who we are and what we do in business. It is a never-ending process.

Strife and turmoil are cyclical. Happiness and contentment are on the other side of that sphere, and they too are cyclical. The way things were done fifty years ago, as a rule, will not work in the same manner today; therefore, we view the landscape, watch intently for changes that are taking place, and then mold ourselves and our businesses toward those changes, always seeking improvement to set ourselves apart. Doing so helps you by being a better asset to your clients...and families.

Being unique and never losing sight of what is most

important – ‘our customers’ and families’ best interest’ – should be your mantra.

Make the right choices, be accountable for your decisions and actions – always! Have others’ best interests as your compass. In the long run you will prevail over and over again.

The process never stops. Make the right choice – be responsible!

“A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.” - Albert Einstein

As humans, we fear failure. There is nothing new about this fact. But as humans, we have been given an incredible gift, the gift of being able to think, to be creative, to have the ability to rationalize, speak, and communicate. So where is the conflict? We have a tendency to worry too much about what others think. We worry about what they may say about us and how they may characterize us. It's really foolish.

Each of us needs to shed the cloak of fear and go out and experience new things - mistakes and failures. They are just a part of life, and we learn

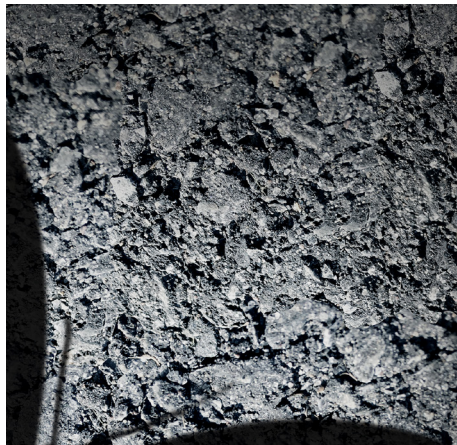
from them.

After FINALLY inventing the light bulb, a reporter asked Thomas Edison – “... how does it feel to have failed over seventeen hundred times (that's 1,700) at making the light bulb...” his response was brilliant: “...I didn't fail! I just discovered 1,700 ways how not to make a light bulb.”

So not only in business but in life, explore, reach out, expand and try new things. Challenge yourself, pick up a new hobby, take a martial arts class, learn to Tango, take up a foreign language, do something new

and different to expand your horizon.

Make a plan; take a risk. Oh, and if you make a mistake, make the wrong turn, fall down and scratch your arm, get up, laugh it off and do it again... enjoy the ride!





“Focus on listening. Listening is a sign of respect... a demonstration that people and their ideas are important... Listening enables you to build a foundation of trust that is essential to motivation.” - John Baldoni

Listening is a skill, a true skill that, when mastered, is much better than speaking. A good listener is respected because a good listener gives respect through that action. A good listener has these qualities and characteristics. Do you?

Makes great eye contact – eye contact is essential. ‘The eyes are the windows of the soul.’ When you’re having a conversation with someone, stop and look intently in their eyes and ‘actively’ hear what they’re saying.

Doesn’t interrupt – listen to what the person is saying. Don’t think ahead or anticipate what the person is going to say. Interrupting is rude and offputting.

Repeats for clarity – after the person is finished, they repeat back what they’ve heard is correct and there isn’t

any doubt. This way you bring intent and clarity to the conversation.

Does what they say they will do – through the conversation if you agree to do something or provide information, follow through. It speaks volumes about your character.

Is incredibly gracious – after the conversation, thank the person, reach out, shake their hand and let them know how much you’ve appreciated and enjoyed getting to know them or the information they’ve shared.

Developing and honing these skills will help you gain further respect from friends, colleagues, and clients. Practice “deliberate listening” – the rewards will be long-lasting.



“The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining.” - John F. Kennedy

Too often, us humans become reactive or complacent as it were. When business is brisk, we become too busy to market ourselves and our companies. We say, “...I’m just too busy, I need a break to get things done...” and then something happens – we lose our best client, our contact leaves, gets demoted, fired or replaced – or, worse yet, a 911 incident. We sit there shaking our heads saying, “...what the heck just happened...?” And now the mad scramble begins.

Business owners, marketers and salespeople, take heed, NEVER give up the pursuit of continually reviewing and analyzing your business, your sales, and what you do. ALWAYS look at ways of making change that will benefit the customer – ask questions, get to know what your clients are TRULY looking for and be proactive, ‘repair the roof when the sun is shining,’ not when it’s raining.

Your attention to what “may” come is far more important to what is at hand – think micro and macro. Read, educate, listen, read some more, listen MORE intently – ASK QUESTIONS and proactively run your business. ‘Repair

the roof’ now, that way, when it begins to pour, you’ll be prepared.

“Remember that there is nothing stable in human affairs; therefore avoid undue elation in prosperity, or undue depression in adversity.” - Socrates

Business and life track up and down. Currently you may be in a down mode. That will certainly change for the positive, but inevitably the pendulum will swing back into prosperity. It's life. Life is cyclical. That is a life lesson, one we must embrace. It's not a bad thing; however, when times are flush and moving along great, we FORGET about those days of struggle and lose focus.

Remember to appreciate what you have when things are going well, but never forget the slumps and the lessons derived from those challenges. Also, when things are at their seemingly worst, do not get caught up in the quagmire of adversity. Things will change - they ALWAYS do.

So what is the lesson here? Create stability and balance in your life, appreciate the things you have now, prepare for potential slumps, and always focus on the positive. Doing so will keep you on track during lean as well as flush times.

Create balance, stay positive...never lose your focus!



“Visualize yourself accomplishing the task at hand.” - Scott Beare



Human mind and spirit are powerful, more powerful than anyone can begin to imagine. We only use about one-tenth of one percent of our brain's potential or capacity. That's astounding!

Zig Zigler related a story about a US Serviceman who was a POW during the Vietnam War. During his captivity he was jailed in solitary confinement. In order not to go stir crazy, the soldier began a process of mentally playing a golf course back home in his cell. Every day in his head, he played every shot, selected which club to use, when to chip, when to putt. He mentally played the game over and over in his head every day.

Upon his release and his eventual

return to the United States, he happened upon this golf course and “recalled” that time in captivity and played a flawless game of golf at that course. The mind is truly amazing!

Athletes, actors, and successful salespeople ‘visualize’ themselves making the winning shot, delivering the perfect performance, closing the big deal; they see and create their outcome.

When you wake this week, look in the mirror, see yourself as a success, see yourself winning, see yourself in TOTAL control of your destiny. No matter how big or small the project, begin with the “visualization of accomplishment.” It will then and only then become your reality.

“Whether you realize it or not, you have the power to be successful by helping others succeed.” -David Cottrell

It's quite remarkable, when you help others succeed, you ensure your own success. It seems like a lifetime ago that I worked for a woman that was, well, let's say appalled at the fact that I would go to shows and share my 'trade secrets' with competitors.

I can remember the conversation vividly when she said, 'I am bewildered by the fact that you find the need to share your ideas and creativity with your competition.' I thought about that for a while and replied, "You know, I am ONE creative mind in this industry. I do NOT hold the Holy Grail of great ideas. In fact, if I share my ideas with an audience of say 200 colleagues, inevitably I will have at minimum 20 percent of the audience approach me with an idea or concept they've worked on that may (and has in many cases) spark a creative nerve in me, which then spawned yet another great idea. In addition, they give me great professional criticism on my presentations, little faux pas or quirks they see or something I may have left out, like a questioning session. So, you see, at the

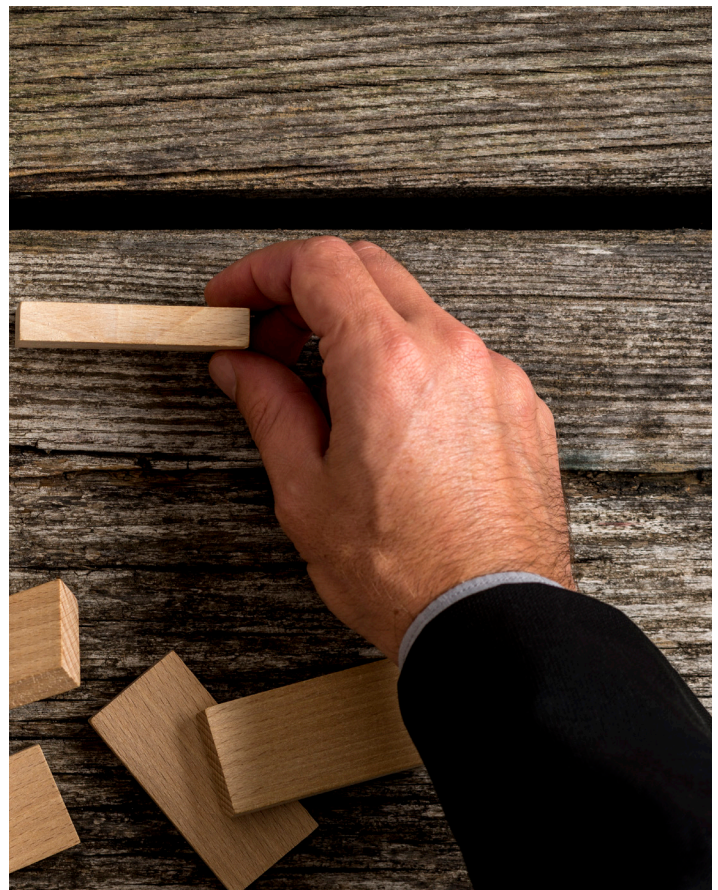
end of the day, I'm the true benefactor in this big-picture equation."

Needless to say, I left soon after that - she just didn't get it.

At the end of the day, when you give freely, helping others succeed, it comes back to you, in some cases twenty-fold. From my vantage point, that's a great R.O.I. - agreed?

So take a moment to see where you can give back. Be a mentor, share a great idea, assist someone in an area where you have knowledge and expertise. Doing so, you lift the professionalism of our industry, and your reward is knowing that you have done something good for another human being!

Be well, help others succeed, and reap the rewards of your kindness. "You've got to give to get!"





“You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.” - Wayne Gretsky - NHL Hall of Famer

Risks – they’re what we take in life. Business decisions, relationships, financial decisions, they’re all risky. What is the common problem that prevents us from taking that shot, making that decision, making that call? What holds you back?

I agree that throwing caution to the wind and going off half-cocked is not sound. Not doing anything is worse yet. Years ago I was speaking at a conference with my friend Brian Hicks. We were about to discuss creative marketing to 50-plus PhD marketing professors. Brian was frantic. He needed his 3x5 cards of notes so he would have something to fall back on. I had seen Brian present before – he was stellar. I recall saying, “Trust your abilities, take the shot, and speak from your heart...you KNOW this stuff.”

We were each given 20 minutes. I went first; Brian second. He heeded my advice and began speaking, without notes, from his heart, for 45 minutes and had every academic in that room on the edge of their seat. **He was brilliant!**

You’re brilliant as well and have what it takes to be incredibly successful, but oftentimes the fear of not “getting it 100% right” holds you back, so you do nothing. Please, the next 30 days, trust yourself, your abilities, take calculated risks. You’ll be amazed at what you accomplish. You’ll be proud as well.

“The Biggest Room in the World... Is the Room for Improvement.”

- Harvey Mackay



Look in the mirror. Are you happy with what you see? Do you see perfection? It's amazing how many people are constantly saying that the world around them is the problem "...the economy, people don't understand me."

When was the last time you looked at everything in your life and said, "What can I do to improve, make myself

better, and be more of a contribution to others?"

When we take a moment to think differently and point the finger inward and are honest and authentic with ourselves, we can accomplish great things.

Do this first. Focus there, and the outcome will be remarkable!



“Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending.” - Carl Bard
→

Tragically many people live in the past, always looking back on what they “coulda or shoulda” done way back when. What happened in the past is over. You can’t change that. And while it is important to learn from the past, dwelling on the past is consuming in the most negative sense.

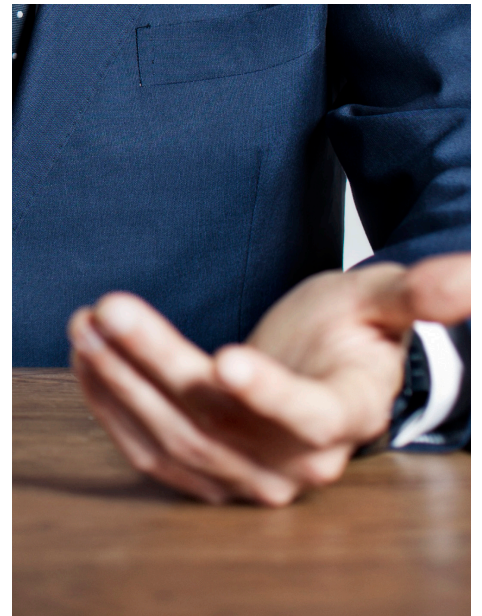
Now is the time to shed the past, let go! Begin to blaze new trails and “create opportunities,” see the future in a much brighter, less-cluttered manner. Make your ending something to be proud of. Start now – start today!

Anyone can do it! What about you?



It's amazing, when talking with clients and individuals in general, how self-depraving folks can be. They talk themselves OUT of opportunities by saying, 'they won't buy from me,' 'I can't do that,' 'that's an impossible task,' or 'it just won't work.' Many times, these comments are made before we even try to make an effort. Wouldn't it be more productive to say, 'why wouldn't they buy from me,' 'I have a ton to offer,' 'I look forward to the challenge,' 'let's pull together to make this work'? We tell ourselves things subconsciously, and sadly we begin to believe these messages. I am here to tell you, you are more capable and amazing than you give yourself credit.

If you are going to talk, and you are, talk positively and affirm to yourself you CAN and WILL make things happen. You will be astounded at the effect!



“Be careful how you are talking to yourself because you are listening.” - Lisa M. Hayes



“The most dangerous phrase in language is, ‘We’ve always done it this way!’” - Grace Hopper

Complacency breeds mediocrity!

Companies and individuals that remain content with the status quo eventually fizzle out and go by the wayside. Look at every advancement around you. Imagine if the inventors said, “We’re done.” How remedial would many of the things we use every day be? Computers, cars, security systems, food and music – the list goes on.

It is important – no, imperative – that we look at reinventing what we do, how and why we do the things we do, whether it’s personal or business. In order to grow, change is a must.

Take some time this week to stop and think about how certain changes in your life could positively affect you, your family and friends, as well as your business. It could be a few minor changes that make a major difference.

“Always seems impossible until it’s done.” -Nelson Mandela

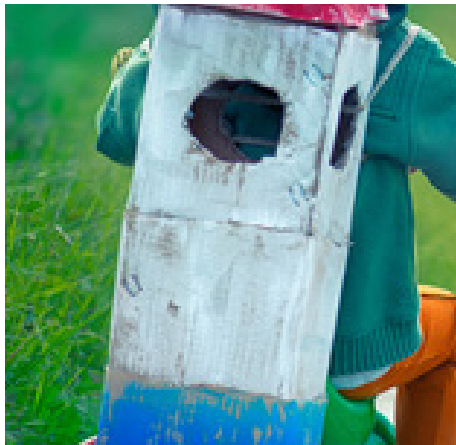
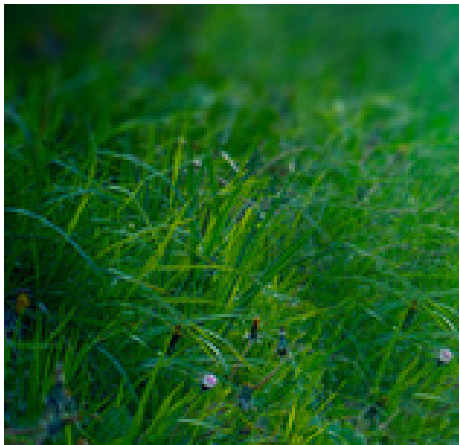
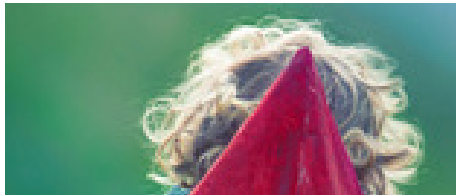
When was the last time you looked at some activity that you were about to embark on and thought it daunting? Weight loss, running your first 6K, doing your first presentation in front of an audience. At first blush, many of the things we do seem ‘impossible,’ but when you focus, put forth the right effort, things happen!

Ten months ago, my doctor insisted that I lose weight or suffer the consequences of developing diabetes. I hate needles. Fifty pounds was my target. I thought, ‘impossible.’

Six months into my program, I had dropped 52 pounds.

I did feel it was ‘impossible,’ but ‘it’s done,’ and I feel amazing.

When you feel the next task you’re about to take on appears ‘impossible,’ analyze, focus, plan, execute and follow through. When you do this and are consistent with this methodology, you’ll be amazed by the outcome!





“Letting go has nothing to do with quitting. Ask yourself, Am I sticking it out, or am I staying stuck? You know yourself best!” - Alex Elle

Each of us at some point in time in our careers has faced this dilemma. I face it often. We get to a crossroad and seem stuck – what do you do?

As this quote states, ‘You know yourself best!’ The hardest point is making the conscious decision to make a change. It was hard for me, but I find when I’m introspective about all facets of my life and constantly looking for ways to make things better, never settling, amazing transformations take place.

If you have truly exhausted all channels to make something better, make a change. Years ago I came to the realization that I was too young to have started a business. My ego, saying I was ‘president’ got in the way. Looking back, I should have worked for others, learned more, asked more questions, taken more classes, developed more

mentors and coaches before I embarked on owning a business. Now, after doing the things mentioned above, I am more equipped to be ‘president’ of my company.

I was ‘staying stuck.’ Are you? What facets of your business or personal life are stuck? Don’t think for a moment that redirecting your efforts after you’ve exhausted every opportunity is quitting. It’s not. It’s intelligent.

Just don’t wait too long.



“Sometimes the best helping hand is a good, firm push.” - Joann Thomas

I understand how difficult it can be to get motivated, whether it be business, your health in the form of exercise or diet, creating a proposal or making follow-up calls. There are times when you want to cry 'enough!' I experience this myself.

While it's true we need time to unwind, we must also push ourselves to achieve the things that matter to us. Create balance in your life – taking care of you first, family second, friends third, and business last and doing each with 100% focus will bring great rewards.

I have a client/friend that I coach who said, “I listened to what you said. I feel so good about my decision. I'm taking up kickboxing...it's so exhilarating!” It may sound simplistic, but the mind shift and difference in attitude was astounding. I trust that enthusiasm will spill over into every other aspect of her life.

Here is my weekly push...do something good for yourself. You deserve it!

“The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The leader adjusts the sails.” - John Maxwell

Your business environment is ever changing, and there are those that complain, those that pray for things to change, and those that take action.

Which one are you?

When the economy tanked, most people pointed to that situation and blamed their slump to “the economy,” yet there were those that thrived...why?

Business leaders that plan, keep their ear to the ground, and proactively run their companies thrive even when there are downturns. The key is focus.

When you have a plan, you can adjust the direction of your company to maintain momentum even in turbulent times.

Take control of your vessel, map out your course, and adjust when needed. The results will be amazing!



“If you allow people to make more withdrawals than deposits in your life, you will be out of balance and in the negative. Know when to close the account.” - Christie Williams



Life/Work balance is essential for growth, both personally and professionally. That said, each of us have or have had individuals in our lives that have been anchors, people that weigh us down and constantly take and rarely give. These “withdrawals” come in various forms: nastiness; not being loyal; asking for quotes and never getting any business; constantly draining you for ideas, time, and donations. When do

you say no or, better yet, when do you “close the account”?

I believe that by weeding the constant “takers” out of your life, you will make room for the possibility of another opportunity or someone to enter that is positive, appreciative, respectful, and considerate.

An absolute must is ensuring that YOU are the same. Consider your

own motives. How are you with others? If you’re constantly making withdrawals, make a change. And for those in your life that do this, the time is now to close the account.

“It’s better to believe than to disbelieve; in so doing you bring everything into the realm of possibility.” -Albert Einstein

It amazes me to see and hear those that give up... and generally they give up right at the dip, the uptick. Unfortunately, we have outside forces constantly looking to drag us down telling us our ideas and thoughts are crazy, stupid, they don't make sense, why would anyone buy into that? Tragically we begin to embrace those thoughts, and then self-doubt begins to manifest itself within us.

I'm here to tell you, each of you are AMAZING, BRILLIANT, and TALENTED. Never let the naysayers, those that are constantly looking at the glass half empty, be YOUR barometer for success – **you're better than that.**

When you begin to believe in YOURSELF and what you can achieve, the possibilities are endless.





“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago...

The next best time is NOW.” - Chinese Proverb

You cannot look back and say, “Wow, I should have done that...” You could, but to what end?

You can certainly look back and see that it could have been a good course of action. You can make a commitment to do something about it NOW. Otherwise, in twenty years you’ll be having the same conversation. Take proactive, actionable steps now to ensure that five, ten, twenty years from now you can marvel at what you have planted. Reflect on this as you move forward during the week.

Do what you’ve always wanted to do now!

I’m looking forward to seeing what you plant!

“Your smile is your logo, your personality is your business card, how you leave others feeling after an experience with you becomes your trademark.”

- Jay Danzie



We get one chance to make a difference. That initial impression is critical. And, make no mistake, future touches are equally important!

In today's business climate, we must realize and instill in our respective teams that we must earn the trust and loyalty of our clients every day! Never feel that you have a "lock" on a client. That is the worst mindset you could have.

Avoid becoming complacent. Complacency leads to mediocrity, and that is the tipping point where

we lose our edge and, even worse, perhaps a client.

Every touch is important, because every touch leaves a mark. Good or bad, it leaves a mark!

How do people view you? What is YOUR trademark?



“You can’t see your reflection in boiling water; similarly, truth cannot be seen in a state of anger, so always analyze before you finalize.” - Unknown

I have known people throughout my life that I would affectionately classify as the **‘Ready, Aim, Fire’** types, reacting without all the facts.

You probably know someone like this as well.

When trying to solve a problem or confronting someone about a situation, it is imperative that you have all the facts in order to have a rational, level-headed conversation. This provides the following: clarity, respect, a clear solution, and an effective resolution.

When it comes to resolving problems, dealing with heavy issues and dispute resolution, take the time to gather all the facts first, analyze your findings, do it swiftly, and create a common-ground solution.

The ‘Ready, Aim, Fire’ scenario NEVER works. It only breeds frustration, contempt, and ill feelings which are not conducive to progress.



Nothing could be more truthful. If you are not putting action steps into a written plan, nothing will happen. I speak often on the platform to the importance of creating a written plan. Interestingly, when I ask audiences 'who has a marketing plan, only 30 percent raise their hands.' When I further the questioning by asking, 'who has that plan in writing,' the response is dismal. Only about 10 percent raised their hands.

You cannot successfully run a thriving, sustainable business without a plan.

I have seen clients of mine that have embraced this process and have gained measurable strides in generating meaningful sales and amazing profits.

Here's an example:

One of my clients was generating approximately \$150,000.00 a year in sales at a reasonable profit margin. In order to grow and reach their goal, the realization set in that a plan was needed to significantly move the needle. Two years later my client/friend is tracking at nearly \$700,000

in sales AND has increased profits by 9%.

How? They worked with me to develop a plan, wrote it down, followed the plan, held themselves accountable to the plan, and now their dreams are being realized.

If you want to get traction in your business, create a plan, write it down into actionable steps, work those action steps, and I promise, as with my client, your dreams will come true as well.

“A dream written down with a date becomes a goal. A goal broken down into steps becomes a plan. A plan backed by action makes your dreams come true.” - Greg S. Reid



“When you feel like quitting, think about why you started.” - unknown

Have you ever reached the point where you've thought, "I'm finished!?"

We've all been there...I have. When you get feeling like this, I strongly suggest that you think about this quote and take a moment and look back to see how far you've come. Generally, these feelings of wanting to give up are temporary and are fueled by a bunch of little things that come to a head and overwhelm you. Try not to let it. Don't be done!

On my recent quest to lose weight, I have wanted to quit more times than not, and then I think about why I started: my health, my wife and children. I want to be there for them for a long time. And not to mention, my doctor telling me I'd be diabetic if I didn't change...ahhh! That's why I started - and I won't quit!

When the feeling swarms over you, take a deep breath and reflect on today's quote, give yourself a few moments, and the feeling will pass.

“Tell the negative committee that meets inside your head to sit down and shut up.” -Ann Bradford

Sadly we're often our own worst enemy.

We listen to what others say about us, process the information, and then begin to believe it.

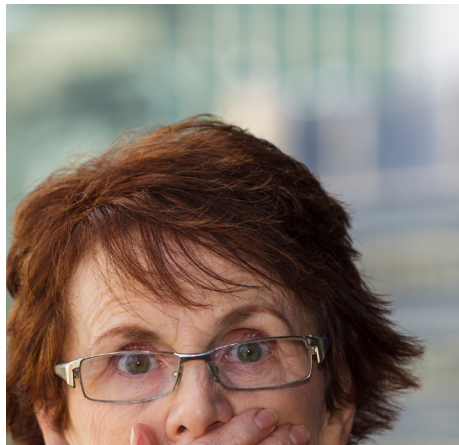
Face it, you know if you're phony or authentic. I err on the side that most people are honest and authentic; however, people that aren't comfortable with their own lives love to bring others down.

These are the folks that create your "In-Head Committee!"

Focus on the solid qualities you possess, turn a deaf ear to the naysayers whose only goal is to bring you down to their level.

You have a ton to offer the world. Negativity only prevents you from delivering on what will positively benefit others.

Time to focus on positive thoughts and the brilliance you bring.





“If you want to fly, give up everything that weighs you down.” - Toni Morrison

Letting go of things that impede your progress means everything. Negative people, bad suppliers, rotten clients; these people are toxic and serve you no purpose.

By creating a “clearing” in your business and personal life, you open up space where positive, productive thoughts and ideas can foster, and grow!

Think about the last time you cleaned out that storage shed or attic. Remember all that space you created? What great feeling, right?

Do the same for your business. Take the time quarterly to review your clients. Who are the late payers or the ones that want you to do things on the cheap? Which clients don't appreciate your value or give you the run around?

Cut them loose. Doing so, like your attic, will open up space where you can replace with a new, profitable, and appreciative client.

This goes for friends too!



“Don’t live the same year 75 times and call it a life.” - Robin Sharma

In just five more days, another major chapter of your life will begin. How will you write yours? What will it look like this time next year?

Will you...

Write a book? Travel somewhere exciting?

Do something completely daring and amazing?

Rekindle or heal a past relationship that has gone sideways?

Fall in love all over again?

Start a new career or start something you’ve been longing to do?

Change the world, or maybe just yours?

Perfect!

You have a choice. Make the decision to better yourself, love yourself, forgive yourself, understand yourself, and become a better person.

Write your amazing story... just imagine the possibilities!

“A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while, he knows something.” - Wilson Mizner

I sat in a strategy meeting with Ross Silverstein, CEO at iPROMOTEu, and several others. I took notice of the way he listened to people in that meeting. Most notable was how he never immediately responded to folks. Rather, he paused for about four seconds before commenting. I asked him about that afterwards, and he mentioned that he felt it was a good practice for these reasons: (1) ensuring the person was finished and (2) so he could fully process what they had said. I thought that was brilliant!

Too often, we ask too few questions during the initial courting stage with clients. Worse yet, we don't take the time to really listen. Listening is more important than asking questions because you can always research the answer. Being a good listener creates some very core ingredients for your continued success:

- **Credibility** – a true listening ear evokes caring and professionalism
- **Leadership** – good leaders listen and discern issues, think, then act
- **Understanding** – uncover the entire issue to make sound recommendations
- **Compassion** – a true feel for what the friend, colleague, or client is experiencing
- **Direction** – through listening, you develop a roadmap based on the issues
- **Purpose** – this direction gives the recommendations you suggest purpose
- **Opportunity** – the ability to unlock doors that you never knew existed
- **Creativity** – the ability to deliver one-of-a-kind solutions to fit the specific need

Being the best at what you do involves asking questions, lots of questions, but listening thoroughly and intently is most important and will set you apart.

Some time ago I stumbled into an art studio to have a look. While there I watched a young woman cutting mats for framing. The person I was with was standing several feet away, and I overheard the clerk say, speaking about me, “Wow, that guy asks a lot of questions.” The person I was with remarked, “Yep, and I guarantee he'll know how to cut mats when he leaves here too.” And I do.

Ask questions and then listen intently before you respond and count to four. Oftentimes the great stuff presents itself during the pause. You'll be amazed at the information you gather!





“You’ve got to get up every morning with determination if you’re going to go to bed with satisfaction.” - George Horace Lorimer

Life is tough. It takes personal determination to get up, get started, and keep the wheels moving forward each and every day. Each of us face both personal and business challenges and pressures that affect our moods, our sales, and ultimately our relationships. These challenges take the form of financial, staffing, personal, and business relationship challenges. We all face them to some degree, some more than others. Reality is, these challenges and pressures will always exist.

You must be determined, not discouraged by what you face because it is from those challenges that our mettle, and character is tested and forged.

I am asked often, “How is it possible to do all the things I need to do in one day? It’s insurmountable!” I always say, “...it’s not as bad as you think...and it could be worse...” but truly, it’s not as bad as it appears. You must ‘eat the elephant one bite at a time.’

Focus – create a list of things that need to be done and divide the list into sections: column one, TODAY; column two, THIS WEEK; column three, THIS MONTH; and column four, LONG-TERM. Move things around on the list, and as you accomplish what needs to be done for that day, scratch it off. Move things up the ladder but remain focused and COMMITTED to the process!

The satisfaction you will get at the end of the day from making lists, staying committed to the process, and staying determined to accomplish what needs to be accomplished is critical. Also, being reasonable with yourself, not overcommitting but committing to doing what you can and doing it. Be sure not to shortchange yourself either. Many set the bar too low. Believe me, you can accomplish more in a day than you’ve ever imagined.

Self-evaluate, adjust, stay focused and committed to your plan – you will be pleasantly surprised with the results!

TESTIMONIALS

"I love this. It's exactly what you have inspired me to do with my business – look at it all in a new way. Thanks Cliff. Keep 'em coming!"

————— **Susan Campbell - President** —————

"I can honestly say that this message resonates more than any other I have read. The added caveat is the more successful we were with past formula, the longer and harder it becomes to break free. I implore people to soul-search, be happy they had success, and move forward with same enthusiasm to the new formula!"

————— **Louis Kaplan, President** —————

"Cliff, you always brighten my day. You are so distinctive that I can hear your voice in every blog-post – appreciate this info... I love this idea! Finalizing my plans for 2019 and this fits right in!"

————— **Gretchen Morris – President** —————

"Hi Cliff, just want to thank you for the great encouragement and reminders all year long, and especially this one today! Every week I look forward to your posts. Thank you from my heart for continually sharing your heart and your wisdom!"

————— **Jayne Sanchez, CAS, President** —————

"Thanks Cliff...that means a lot...and I needed to hear this today! Appreciate you!"

————— **Naomi Bodway, President** —————



*"Great words Cliff! Really great words
Thank-you. You just gave me a positive mental charge. All the best."*

Joe Guagliani - President

*"You know me so well- I cannot believe you knew I was totally
unfocused today - thanks for the reminder :)"*

Rochelle Moneta, President

"I loved this one! Thanks for including me in the motivating emails."

Rhonda Wingo, President





What is 30 seconds to greatness?

True greatness is the ability to achieve what YOU choose to achieve where you choose to achieve it; at the highest level possible.

Greatness is to live your own life on your own terms, and to live it big!

What makes greatness? Is greatness defined by financial performance, the capacity to innovate or implement, or the ability to set a strategic vision that galvanizes a group of followers?

Greatness is a personal mindset and mantra. Think *Field of Dreams*, but bigger. You have the capacity for greatness. We all do. Cliff's inspirational quotes, antidotes, thoughts on life, and assessment tools can help you hone your dormant skills to reach your full potential.



Cliff Quicksell is on a mission to squash the mediocrity and fear that runs rampant in small businesses. A writer, consultant, and speaker, I bring real-life lessons to leaders and sales teams who are tired of hearing "can't" and are ready to stop letting others dictate the boundaries of their success.

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