

## Motivation is the Key to a Successful System

How can you tell if you're getting good advice? It is an age old question that the business owner always asks him or herself. How many times have you said that you're glad you didn't pay for the advice, because the advice was exactly worth what you paid for it, nothing. If you're like me, you may be old school in your thoughts. The first thing you look for in advice is if it passes the common sense litmus test. The second thing you would look for would be if the advice you are about to get is something worth paying for. Third, does it pass the KISS test, (keep it simple stupid). The fourth thing is the advice thinking inside the box, or outside the box. Believe it or not, I think you should only take advice that's inside the box. Why do I say this, it's simple really, it passes the three tests listed above. I want common sense advice that is worth paying for, and the way to tell that it is worth paying for is to know that the advice you are about to get will work VS. might work. Why would I ever wanted pay for something that might work, when I can pay for something that I know will work. It is not a matter of whether you should try thinking outside the box; it is a matter if you should pay to have someone think outside the box for you. So to sum it up, I would look for common sense advice that's worth paying for, simple to understand and implement, it has been proven to work, and it's a good value. It sounds so simple doesn't it? Then why is it so hard to find good advice? I can't answer that question, what I can say is that you have come to the right place. I have been consulting to business owners for 20 years. What may be of more interest to you is that my wife and I own 3 completely unrelated, successful businesses. Now that I've hopefully given you a reason to listen to me, let's start the process of teaching you how to motivate yourself...

As a small business consultant I have found that no matter what type of business you have there are only three reasons why you started your business. Remember way back when you started how much you enjoyed your job, in a word it was **fun**. You would wake up early, work hard all day, and go to bed late and all the time thoroughly enjoying what you did. You would talk with your spouse about how enjoyable your day was and all the good things that happened. You truly appreciated your time with your kids and had more fun with them than you do now. In your prior life you may have worked for "the man". When you remember back to that job, it was no fun, but worst of all they controlled how much money you could make, often based upon whether or not your boss liked you or not. Well, I hope you like your current boss, but more importantly you're now in a position to be the only thing that prevents you from making as much money as you would like. Simply put, the second reason you started your business was so that you could determine how much **money** you would make. You are the one who controls how many hours you work a day, week or month. Why is this so important? Usually because the point of owning your own business is to allow yourself the freedom to spend **time** with your family on your terms. Often the reason we want to make more money is that it allows us to hire other people, or purchase technology to free up our time, reason number three. If you learn nothing more from reading this article other than remembering why you started your business in the first place was to have fun, make money, and spend more time with your family, it will have been well worth the time to have read it.

All too often we lose sight of what we're trying to achieve as a business owner. If you just spend time focusing on the parts of the business you enjoy the most, not only will you have more fun, but you will also start making more money. The simplest way to begin this process is for you to control your day instead of your day controlling you. Thomas Jefferson once said "I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it." I am a firm believer in this concept. But I also believe in another

saying, “*work smarter, not harder.*” When you put these two sayings together, I believe you have the perfect recipe for success. When you work hard in organized way, in a smart way, you will achieve all the goals that you have set. Frankly, I believe that success is a self fulfilling prophecy. If you set up a system for your business to run on a daily basis, and you actually follow that system every day, you will be working hard, efficient, and find yourself to be rather lucky. One of the most difficult things for a business owner to do is to set up a system. They are often consumed with trying to find the perfect system for their business to run. I know people who spend an entire career trying to create the perfect system, not only did they never find the perfect system; they never worked any system at all. All systems will be a success if you actually work the system every day. You don’t need to look far to see that this is true. Just look at some of the most successful companies that you know. Starbucks, Home Depot, Wal-Mart, Walgreens, Lowe’s, Target, McDonald’s, Subway, what do they all have in common, systems, uniformity, it doesn’t matter where you go in this country, when you visit one of these companies’ stores, regardless of where they are located they will operate in the exact same way. There are so many advantages to having a system that they are too numerous to list here. But let me give you a few to make my point. With a system the amount of time it takes to train a new person will greatly be reduced. The new employee will know what to do and exactly when to do it. The fact they repeat the process on a daily basis, often at the same time every day, will give them a tremendous amount of satisfaction knowing they are accomplishing exactly what is expected of them. This also makes the process of managing employees much easier. Most people cannot effectively perform two, three, or four activities at the same time. An employee may be returning an email the same time that are on the phone and hear a dog in the background that may need their assistance. None of these activities are getting undivided attention. This will only increase the chance for errors, allow for possible injuries, and possibly expose your business to litigation. If you could only focus on one individual activity at a designated time, not only would you perform those activities in a more expeditious manor, you would perform them with fewer errors, thus saving money and time. This is not to say that there is never a reason to deviate from your schedule or system. This is real life; things will happen that will require your immediate attention that are not a part of your schedule. The point is not that these things occur, but rather if they are the rule, or the exception during your day. They need to be the exception, not the rule. This is the difference between you controlling your day and your day controlling you.

Any good system should start with the daily schedule. A simple spreadsheet will do. Start by listing your hours of operation down the left side in 1 hour increments of your spreadsheet. Across the top, list the days of the week. If your practice is like most others, your office hours may vary from day to day. Now start to fill in when certain things should be accomplished. For example, let’s say you check and return emails and voice mails from 9:00AM to 10:00AM. From 10:00AM to 11:00AM you call to schedule appointments with existing clients. From 11:00AM to 12:00PM you have an appointment. From 12:00PM to 1:00PM you have lunch appointment with a center of influence or top client. From 1:00PM to 1:30PM you check emails and voicemails. From 1:30 PM to 2:00AM you call to confirm appointments for the following day. From 2:00PM to 2:30PM you run proposals, illustrations, and hypotheticals for tomorrow’s appointments. Are you getting the idea? You’ll need to have every hour of the day accounted for in this manner. This is the easy part.

The hard part is to make sure that you actually follow this schedule every day. I’m sure you think it would be easy to follow this schedule, but it won’t be, because something will always come up every day to try to take you off of the schedule. You have to be motivated to stick to the schedule and only deviate from it for the most severe of circumstances. You must be firm in your belief that by following the system every day without exception, will ultimately allow you to be more efficient, more productive, have more enjoyable work environment, and will make your business more profitable. When economic conditions are difficult, as they are today, working on a system or schedule like this one will give you the proper focus to help

keep yourself positive, and motivate you knowing that if you are consistent in what you do, not only will you survive, but you will thrive in difficult times. The system can help you by preventing you from being distracted by all the doom and gloom. If you spend all of your time worrying about what could be, instead of focusing on what you know that needs to be done, you will spend the rest of your career with your wheels spinning in the mud. If you can do this I promise that in 6 to 9 months you will achieve three things. You will have more fun, you will be making more money, and you will have more personal time.

## ***Staying Motivated***

You may have heard the old sayings *"starting is the hardest part"* or *"a journey of 1000 miles starts with your first step"* or *"never put off till tomorrow which you can start today."* I love the clichés because there is some level and truth in all of them. Although, it is good and important to step back from your business and look at the big picture, it is also very important not to let the big picture get you down if it appears that you are not on track. In order to be successful it is critical that you focus on the here and now. Earlier we spoke about the need to create a daily schedule of all the activities that you need to accomplish. Additionally, I told you that it would not be possible to do everything on your schedule every day or even at the assigned a time, because life happens. The important thing to remember is if you are off track try to simply get back on track as soon as possible. There is a saying I use to help people put things in perspective. Imagine one day we were talking and I told you that I wanted you to build the beach by yourself with no equipment. Furthermore, you would have no help. It probably wouldn't be long before you'd told yourself that this goal was unattainable and would have quit. Now imagine, I told you I have very simplistic task for you to achieve. Your goal is to simply move one handful of sand every day. It is likely would say to yourself this is a very simple goal. And you would be right. This is true because it meets the three criteria that I believe must be a part of every goal in order for it to be achieved. The criteria are as follows, the goal must be small, measurable, and obtainable. When you meet these criteria you should be able to say to yourself that any goal is easy to reach. The funny thing about moving one handful of sand and every day, is that one day you will look up to all the handfuls of sand you moved, and you will see a beach. It is at that time you'll be amazed of what you can accomplish when you put your mind to it. It is only when you look in the rear view mirror that you become awestruck by your abilities.

There is another saying that you've probably heard *"there's nothing to fear but fear itself."* I've always interpret this in a slightly different way. I believe fear only exists about the unknown. We're not afraid of a dog, we're afraid of a dog if we do not know if it bites or not. We are not afraid of flying, we are afraid if we don't know if the plane will crash. We're not afraid of starting a business, we are afraid of not knowing if we will succeed or fail. When you begin to start taking some of the emotion out of your decisions things tend to get easier. If I talk to one person, one time, it is unlikely that I will get them as a client. If I talk to 100 people one time I will probably get a client. If I talk to 10 people every day, I will probably get a new client every week for the rest of my career. The hard part is not talking to people, but rather talking to 10 people every day without exception and no excuses, in a word its discipline. Discipline by itself will not create success, especially if you are not focused on the right activities. At the end of the day, there are only three pieces to your business, customer service, operations, and marketing & sales. All of these activities are critical to your success. Whenever possible you should try to hire different people for each of these activities so they can specialize and become more productive at their jobs in a much more rapid manner. By no means is it necessary to hire fulltime people for all of these various activities. We have a part time person who does all of our marketing. We have another part time person in our office to assist with scheduling and paperwork, but the primary responsibility of everyone is to offer all of the various services and products to our clients when they are speaking to them. The staff is measured on these

activities on a daily basis. They are required to accomplish a minimum set of activities daily. These activities meet the criteria of being small, measurable, and obtainable. Our employees are rewarded for achieving these activities in various ways, ranging from days off of work, to a possible bonus or raise for consistently meeting and exceeding expectations. The magic word is consistently.

To give some credence to this you should know that as I write this at the end of 2010 we will have the most profitable year in our existence which is over 16 years. Yes, even during the greatest recession in my lifetime. The reasons are simple we have a system and we follow it in a disciplined way. Of course there are several things that need improvement in our business, but there is no business that doesn't have room for improvement. That leads me to a thought about the term that is too readily thrown about businesses, athletes, and other people and the public spotlight. The term is greatness. The greatest people in their respective fields never call themselves great. It is always someone else who calls them great. I find that there is one common thread with all people that are considered great by their peers or others. All these people have one small, measurable, and attainable goal. The goal is also easily measured. The goal: simply be better today than I was yesterday by even the smallest of measures, everyday for the rest of their lives or careers. It is undeniable that if you get better at what you do every day that you will ultimately achieve any goals you set for yourself. It is nonnegotiable and non-arguable. If you want to achieve greatness, don't say it, just do it, every day!

The worst thing you can do is not to try because you are afraid of failure. Any new system you may implement in your business could easily take 6 to 12 months before you see the success that it could bring. In a strange way, I believe you should be trying to fail every day. This is true if you are doing something that you know will work vs. something you think might work. If it is something that you know will work then your failure is nothing more than that the tuition you pay for success. Remember nothing in life comes for free, especially anything worthwhile.



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