

# Common Sense Business Basics

By Al LeBlanc

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Let's face it ... America is the easiest country in the world to get rich if it is your goal, but you have to use your head.

- 1- Get in business for yourself.
- 2- Sell a product or service people want.
- 3- Do it well and do it honestly.
- 4- Do it over and over.
- 5- Save 10% of the gross.
- 6- Pay cash for luxuries.
- 7- Finance necessities when you have to.
- 8- Take care of your vendors and they'll be there in a pinch.
- 9- Relationships will keep you in business when the economy turns down. Build them.
- 10- Be a communicator. Disappear too often so will your customers!

One of the biggest mistakes I see in business is the inability to delegate. There are some very competent people out there that will either fail or burn out because they're too short sighted to see the value of building a staff. They haven't yet figured out that they need to be free to do what they are best at.

A highly skilled individual shouldn't be dealing with the phones and email. Those things can be delegated to a person who can separate the things that need the boss' attention from the things that don't.

I learned this lesson the hard way over many years in business. So many things suffer when you don't learn to accept the mistakes of others while they learn. Control freaks hate to delegate because it's so much easier to just do it, but that is short sighted. I remember how amazed I was to find many customers were not as concerned about the quality of my work as much as the quality of our relationship.

Quality relationships are always framed around concern for the other person. When you deliberately ignore the feelings of others in your dealings they will quickly move on to someone else. You're not the only fish in the sea. I remember counseling business associates over the years that refused to accept that being right wasn't enough ... you had to prove you cared over the long haul.

I found myself in later years turning work away so that I could devote myself more effectively to my loyal customers. My fear of losing income by passing up work was rewarded in loyal repeat business

that went on for years. When I got to people they got my undivided attention until the work was done. I turned a failing furniture business into a thriving business that was always four to five months back-logged. I found dependable subs to help me over the rough spots during exceptionally busy times.

The amazing part about the whole thing is I was not the best at what I did, but I recognized the key to success with people is letting them know, and proving it with my attitude and service, how important they were to my success. When I was unable to deliver on time they got a call. I always gave extra like pillows and used high quality materials. When I messed up I wrote a check or stopped everything and fixed it on the spot. People won't worry when they know you'll always make good.

Everyone who has been in business for any number of years learns lessons that will vary some based on the business they are in. It is hard to understand what people are dealing with sometimes. I guess the key is the Golden Rule. If you work at putting yourself in your customers shoes you'll start to understand what to do. Conversely, sometimes the customer has to be flexible too ... most confrontational situations occur when expectations are beyond one's ability to deliver. Don't oversell yourself. People will expect you to deliver. Keep promises within common sense parameters.

I remember years ago sending a proposal in for a friend who was in the sports bag manufacturing business to a major catalog company. He had a well-made inexpensive line. His proposal was rejected. When I asked why I was told that he needed to expand his manufacturing capacity before they would look at him. It was explained to me that they could destroy his business because it would take all of his capacity and then some to supply them. In the process he would be unable to service his small bread and butter customers. Should they be forced to drop him, he would immediately go under from the sudden loss of revenue.

It was a wise lesson that many could benefit from. Decide what kind of business you want. Once you do that implement systems that will get you there. You often pass the same people on the way down that you passed on the way up. You need all the friends you can develop. Real success is always peppered with some tough times. It's part of the dues. Never be too stubborn to learn from others. When the student arrives, the teacher shows up.

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