



THE BIKER'S GUIDE TO BUSINESS

SIX TACTICS TO BUSINESS SUCCESS

“Because business moves at the speed of life”

By

Dwain M. DeVille

Navigator

The Biker's Guide to Business, LLC

In my book I refer to myself as a Navigator and explain my Navigation Process. This is because over the years I've come to recognize that running my company is akin to taking a long road trip on my bike, so I treat it as such. Any experienced biker will tell you that the key to arriving at your destination successfully and on time depends on how you handle the in-between that separates here from there.

For a decade and a half I have successfully used my Navigation Process to grow not only my own company, but those of my clients. Now, this isn't Business 101, as the entrepreneurs I work with are already good at what they do. They are all different in that some still want to dominate their respective markets but without having to work so hard, while others have reached that inevitable crossroads where business intersects life and they need to figure out the direction they want or need to take.

On average my clients have been in business for over 30 years, leading successful companies as proven winners. However, these many years of being in the saddle has them suffering from a form of trail fatigue and looking for options. They've reached an intersection and find it difficult to move forward, which tends to confuse those who, at this stage of their career, are used to achieving what they put their minds to.

I say confusing because they are all really good at what they do and are not familiar with this type of roadblock. They come in to work every day and give the

same effort as before (in many cases too much), but just can't gain the traction needed to get there. They say: "We're working harder than ever but the results just aren't coming." They are so close to and intertwined within the business that figuring out which habits are causing this problem is nearly impossible without a different set of eyes. It's like a biker riding the same ride day after day and wondering why the view isn't changing. Which is when they call me.

Our initial conversation usually begins with a client saying: "I'd like you to help me figure out why the hell we're not where we need to be and what I need to do about it." To a degree (all conversations differ) they will uncover one or more of the following symptoms that have led me to their door:

"I'm tired..."

"I'm overwhelmed..."

"I'm constantly fighting more and larger fires..."

"I'm rarely if ever happy anymore..."

"I yearn for the good old days..."

"My team cannot keep pace with our rate of growth..." (Or more important, that of the marketplace.)

"We're always scrambling to meet deadlines at the last minute..."

"We're missing too many deadlines..."

"Why am I always the ultimate answer man (or woman)?"

Or my all-time favorite:

“I’m tired and pissed off because I hired all these people to help pull the damn wagon and when I turned around they were all sitting in it!”

Any of these sound familiar? If so it’s because getting to where you are now required years of hard work as well as many trials and trade-offs. You and your organization have established habits and norms that no longer serve the mission and are now gumming up the works. The people who work for you are now part of an extended family and over time this causes the business to take on a life of its own.

Your employees along with the company become central to all that you do because it’s the means to your success in life. But the years take their toll and you slowly lose sight of where it is you originally wanted to go or, due to circumstances along the way, you changed your destination all together. The markets shifted and the trends changed along with the business, and eventually changed you.

And through it all you’ve been a good steward making mostly right decisions and keeping the company first. You made personal concessions along the way and thought it was no big deal. This is the game you bought into and that’s what you’ve been taught is the price of admission.

Until you wake up one day and wonder if this is all there is to life. You begin to feel stuck and in a rut. What happened to it being about you? When did you begin to lose sight of your goals and dreams? When did you become an employee?

You want control of your life back and to have the business begin working for you like it was supposed to from the start. But the question is how?

That's where I come in. In the role of Navigator I serve as strategist, tactician, mentor, teacher, coach and, above all, trusted advisor. I help my clients stay focused on what is best for them and their companies by providing an attentive ear, open mind and the balls to disagree when I think they are off base.

This role is vitally important because entrepreneurs at every level crave true candor and rarely get it. That's because the old adage of it 'being lonely at the top' is true. Openly sharing everything on your mind to either your staff or family will only serve to confuse and probably scare the hell out of everyone. So that leaves you with few people to turn to for insight and straightforward feedback.

But feedback alone won't get you there. You need a new perspective on your business and how it fits into your life. Bottom line: *your company is nothing more than the economic engine that will hopefully take you where it is you want to go.* Metaphorically speaking, it's what you hop onto daily and ride on your long road trip to success.

And once you've come to view your company as such, you need to apply a process to it that ensures your direction is true and helps you to achieve the level of performance necessary to get there on time. It comes down to doing a better job at navigating your journey.

As entrepreneurs the ride we're most attracted to is the road less traveled because it's much more interesting, has the best view, and challenges us. And it's the need to carve our own path that makes the ride more difficult, as we can't simply rely on an off-the-shelf GPS. Yes, through the experience of others we begin to create our own map, but that's usually on the fly and thereby incomplete and missing many crucial route details.

Then there is simply the road which is sometimes clear but more often than not holds many challenges that pop up in the form of twists, turns and roadblocks. These distractions cause us to wake up one morning wondering where the hell we are and why we wanted to go there in the first place. And oh, by the way...why aren't we there yet!

We begin to question our direction and ability to successfully ride there which causes us to begin looking for answers everywhere. Along the way we read books, hire consultants, reach out to mentors and advisors, and accumulate reams of information. But in the end, all of the information gathered over the course of our life and career must be digested and figured out in order to get to there. And this is where Navigation comes in.

My Navigation Process is designed specifically for these "what now?" moments. What makes it unique is its single-minded focus on having your business work toward your life goals. It clearly identifies the work to be done, and the associated plans, activities, conversations and skills necessary to achieve success.

For the past 15 years this simple yet powerful approach to execution has delivered successful results within a diverse cross section of entrepreneurial companies. Based on proven fundamentals, the process relies on focus and consistency over speed because excellence comes when performance is sustained over time.

And each section of the process is designed to easily adapt to the day-to-day workings of your organization, not disrupt it. The process helps you harness that all-important “do what it takes attitude” that turns your organization into a consistent top performer.

My Navigation Process will help you achieve your goals faster by running your company as if on a long road trip. Much like the biker who’s riding cross-country, you need to do more than just point to a spot on the map and ride. Before lifting the kickstand on your business it’s important to figure out and focus on six things:

The Ultimate Destination

Every successful trip begins with the destination in mind and you do this by answering The Question which helps you determine where it is you want to go in life. You are probably wondering why life comes first -- isn't this about business?

It is my firm belief that business and life are two sides of the same coin and you cannot achieve meaningful success in either unless both are taken into account at the very beginning of the planning stage.

To do this you must place your life goals ahead of business goals. Only when you clearly identify where you want to go in life can you properly focus the company. It's a necessary shift in perspective that will ensure the company always works for you instead of you working for the company. Therefore you need to stop and answer this question:

“It's five years from now and my entire life has gone according to plan...every challenge overcome, every goal achieved. What does it look like?”

Once you've identified your Ultimate Destination in life you can now turn to your business – the economic engine that will take you where it is you've just decided to go.

The Milestones or Legs of the trip

Since the Ultimate Destination is your personal vision of success, you must translate these personal goals into the business, and its here that you focus on where it is the business needs to go. You now have to create a clear and simple Business Scenario that harnesses your economic engine.

To do this you need to break the journey down into “legs of the trip” because focusing only on the Ultimate Destination is a fool’s ride as there’s lots of road between here and there. The legs need to be a series of 12 monthly goals that your team can wrap their brains around and buy into. By clearly defining the stops along the way your team better focuses on the right things and ensures a successful journey.

The Ride Plan or Road Map

Once you’ve built your scenario pointing to the next stop on the map, you and your team must figure out the best path to get there from here. And to do this you need to build a plan.

However, traditional planning can be painful because we’ve been taught that a written plan must take days to produce and rival War and Peace in size. The end result of which is a big honking binder that sits on a shelf and is forgotten after 60 days or so. This is where you need to break the rules and focus solely on the tactics.

After all, you're now focusing only on the next 12 months which will fly by you as swiftly as fence posts along a back country road. Create a simple, straightforward roadmap for your business that brings clarity to the day-to-day workings of your organization and turns your vision into reality.

Communication

Once you've documented the plan, it's all about implementation, and implementation relies on communication. And communication means Meetings. But much like planning, no one likes to meet.

I believe that there are only three types of meetings in any company, and believe it or not you're most likely already attending them. The question is whether or not you're using them the right way and at the right time. They are:

Group Meetings. This is where three or more people come together to discuss one or several topics. These meetings are designed to get information to a lot of people at one time. They should be "global" in nature, and should not drop below the 5,000-foot level in terms of getting bogged down into too much detail and small talk.

Cruise-by Meetings. In my opinion the most overused and least effective way to communicate in business today. In the name of efficiency you drop in – or you cruise-by – a colleague's office. The conversation usually starts with "Got a sec?", or "Quick question for you..." In any case, it's always an interruption to the person receiving the unexpected visit.

These meetings are without structure and tend to foster poor communication, because they are rushed, spontaneous and unplanned. You are always either interrupting someone or being interrupted. Your interaction is subject to hit-or-miss comprehension, and is the single greatest cause of things falling through the cracks in any organization.

Certainly, cruise-by meetings are necessary in every organization. I understand that...it's the real world. Just know that these interactions lack depth, and should therefore be limited to time-sensitive yes or no answers, or brief points of clarification. Never use them for creative or strategic thinking.

One-on-One Meetings - This is the least-utilized, yet most important type of meeting in business today. For one-on-one meetings to be effective, they must -- let me repeat, **MUST** -- be held on a consistent basis either weekly or bi-weekly. This is when you discuss individual performance and explain the why behind the how. This is where the real coaching takes place and fosters a stronger business connection with your team.

When held properly, meetings are still the most effective means of communication within any company. And all great business meetings include three things:

- A clear goal -- and thorough understanding of it.
- What you expect of your team members in terms of the goal – and by when.
- What your team members can expect of you, and by when.

Roles and Responsibilities on the Road

One of my favorite truths is the maxim that “Business is easy...until you add people.” If you give one person a particular task, he is in total control. However, adding another person into the mix doesn't necessary grant them control; the most that they can hope for is influence. Therefore, to a degree, every company is dysfunctional simply because it involves multiple people with competing agendas that eventually lead to conflict and poor performance.

Therefore, it's crucial that as leader of the pack, you're crystal clear as to where you want to go, by when, and that everyone in the organization both understands it and knows with certainty the part they play in it. You want a vision so lucid that everyone joining you will make your agenda their own, because doing so will allow them to realize their dreams as well. And, if they do not want to come along for the ride, so be it. Wish them well and find someone who does.

Riding Skills

Your ability to navigate the gap between here and there on time and at a high level of performance depends on Sharpening Your Riding Skills. Accomplished bikers continuously work on our riding skills because we know that the road ahead is ever-changing. Weather conditions, traffic and other factors beyond our control challenge us each and every time we hit the road. And it's the same in business.

Your team's ability to take quick advantage of opportunities and handle adversity along the way determines the speed at which you reach your goals. I like to

keep this simple and recommend four basic methods to develop and sharpen a team's business skills.

1. **Professional Development Planning** – I use a simple, three part process:

- Ask the employee where they want to go in the company.
- Complete a SWOT analysis on the employee.
 - Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats
- Documented Professional Development Plan signed by both of you.

This format baselines where it is the employee wants to go against where it is you see them fitting and then forges an agreement. It really clarifies the expectations on both sides and makes for a more cohesive working relationship.

2. **Mentoring** - We've all had mentors in our lives, both inside and outside of the companies where we've worked. It's usually informal, but I have found that when you formalize the process within your company your team becomes stronger and the learning curves tend to greatly decrease.

3. **Books** - Over the years, I've found that reading the right business book at the right time is an efficient and effective way to introduce new concepts and techniques into your organization. Rather than leave the reading to chance, I hand the books out during a weekly meeting, and -- depending on their size and depth of information -- my team and I agree upon the number of pages or chapters we will read each week. We then incorporate time to discuss the book during our regularly scheduled meeting. It is during these discussions that we determine

what, if anything, from its pages fits into the organization. I find that this method makes our meetings much more interesting while keeping everyone on the same page both philosophically and tactically.

4. **External Learning Opportunities** – These lie outside of your organization and industry, but hold tremendous value to you as you move the company forward.

- **Centers for Entrepreneurship** – Most major universities now have these centers designed to foster entrepreneurship within their student body and the community. They are usually focused on established entrepreneurial companies, as opposed to start-ups and offer a low-cost way to tap into some incredible programs such as speakers, workshops and various college level courses for employee development.
- **Peer Groups** – There are many organizations out there offering monthly peer group meetings -- whether they are based on CEO, CFO or COO level membership. I've both facilitated and participated in peer groups since 1994; and these meetings have been invaluable to my surviving and eventually thriving in business.
- **Coaching** – I have had a wonderful business coach for the past six years, whose main job is to make me accountable – since, as CEO of my organization, I am accountable to no one other than myself. Sure, there is duty to client and company; but at the end of the day, if I want to turn left, I go left. However, I am totally answerable to my coach.

- **Consultants** – By now, you are fully aware of the fact that I am a business consultant. That said, however, my clients and business associates alike refer to me as the “Anti-Consultant” because of my methods and attitude towards consulting in general. To be sure, there are many great consultants out there in the marketplace; and I am a firm believer that if you have a specific project that needs guidance or aren’t large enough to employ a world class talent full time, then rent it. This is simply another way of saying to hire a consultant.

Conclusion

When you discover your mission, you will feel its demand. It will fill you with enthusiasm and a burning desire to get to work on it.

W. Clement Stone

When you see a group of bikers rolling down the road it’s safe to assume that they all pretty much represent a different walk of life. Heck, meet me at any bike fest and we’ll hang out with accountants, lawyers, doctors, mechanics, carpenters, and real life “bikers”. We come together to celebrate the culture of riding; we come to exercise our passion. It’s the same thing in business; and when you see a group of passionate people -- all with a great desire to get to where they want to go -- it’s a beautiful thing.

The above quote by renowned businessman and author W. Clement Stone speaks to the importance of focused passion. It is my hope that my Biker’s Guide

to Business helps to give you a more focused approach to the day-to-day road course that is your life as an entrepreneur.

Remember: Passion can only thrive in an environment where things are accomplished. Whether it's business or personal, passion and mission cannot prosper without the other. So it always comes down to the work to be done, and you as the leader saying – clearly, and with absolute determination --,

This is my company...

This is our culture...

And this is where we are going...

Because happiness comes when we turn our passion into performance!

Keep the rubber side down and enjoy your ride!

For more information on the Six Keys to high Performance refer to my upcoming book or visit my website:

WWW.BikersGuidetoBusiness.Com