

More Rules of the Road

Throughout this book, I use a number of what my clients call my “Bikerisms”. In much the same way top level athletes use key phrases to re-set their focus, my clients have used these terms to maintain focus and stay on the right path. In that light, I thought it might be of value to list some of my favorites along with their definitions.

“Happiness comes when we turn our passion into performance”

We are most usually most passionate about what we are good at -- and that, therefore, fuels our desire to do more of it. Whether it’s business or personal, identify what you are most passionate about, focus on it, and become excellent at it. It’ll put a smile on your face.

“It’s all about the ‘in-between’”.

Anyone can identify where it is they are today, and most can identify where they want to be in the future. Successfully getting there, however, is entirely dependent on their ability to map out and focus on the “in-between”. All of your plans and subsequent actions must take place within the context of where it is you want to go. If these actions aren’t going to move you closer to your goal or at least set you up to get there, you need to ask yourself -- why are you taking them?

“The key to success isn’t recognizing opportunity, but instead recognizing the opportunities you elect NOT to chase.”

Entrepreneurs possess many assets, none of which is greater than our ability to see opportunity. But is that particular opportunity right for you? Does it fit into your in-between, and match your mission? And even if it is - do you really need to chase it NOW? Nothing will derail a company faster than chasing the wrong opportunity, or following the semi-right opportunity at the wrong time. In other words: be sure before you head down that path.

“Life and business are two sides of the same coin”

I’ve read many so-called experts and life coaches who recommend that we “leave our work behind” at 5:00 PM on the dot. That’s one of the most ridiculous statements I’ve ever heard. We’re entrepreneurs, for goodness sake! Our business is our *life’s passion* and the place where we spend most of our waking life. When we’re not *at* the business, we’re thinking about it. The key to making it work is to accept this fact and control it, while making apologies to no one. Find your balance, and be happy.

“It’s About Balance and Finish Lines”

To dovetailing with the above “ism”: in order to find that elusive “balance” you must first understand that it’s different for everyone. It’s kind of like what makes something pornographic to one person and perfectly acceptable to another; it’s subjective, and there is no single standard. Only when you identify where it is *you* need to go and by when can you better determine the amount of energy and time you need to expend getting there. There isn’t a single person or engine that is designed run at full capacity and speed all the time; so make sure that you allow yourself to cruise a bit once you reach that finish line.

“Potential vs. Success”

These are, in my opinion, the two most misunderstood words in business. Sure, your company may have the potential to become a huge organization. But at what cost? And what does the *other* side of your life need?

Look at your life in as whole before blindly chasing business potential. Why spend time building a monster organization – time that may very well be better devoted to your personal happiness -- when a smaller (and more manageable) one will do?

“Speed of the Leader = Speed of the Pack”

Your team is watching you. If you're passionate, they'll be passionate; if you accept mediocrity, so will they. You set the pace – so never be afraid to set the bar too high. After all, they just might reach it.

“It's not about overcoming fear, but understanding and embracing it instead!”

Issues and conflicts come up all the time in business, and they cannot be avoided. I've always found that problems turn out to be smaller the closer you get to them; so I suggest you take on the attitude of running toward problems and not away from them.

“Business happens at the speed of life”

Our “best laid plans” are always affected by the fact that life itself takes precedence over all. Whether it's your own personal situation or one that's facing your team, stuff is going to happen that will bottleneck your company from time to time. Understand it, accept it, and work around it; there is no other choice.

“It's about the work to be done”

Where personal agendas are a fact of business life, so is the ultimate goal - that of performing the work. Keeping that at the top of your mind will help your team to always make the right *business decision* when the outside world gets in the way. They should always be aware of their role and the level of performance that's needed in order for the team -- and overall company -- to achieve its goals. That is the best way I've found to reinforce responsibility and accountability throughout the company.

“Fit Matters”

Talent is vitally important on any team. However, I'd rather have someone with 80% talent and 100% team skills over someone with 100% talent and only 80% team skills. You only have to look at certain professional sports teams who, year after year, purchase the best talent

money can buy -- only to lose again and again. In order for your team's focus to remain the work to be done, the spotlight always has to be on the team as well.

“Business is simple...till you add people”

People are always the wild card in any business. When only one person is performing a task, he has total control over its outcome. But add one more into the mix and you no longer have control; in fact, the best you can hope for is influence. Therefore, your ability to lead and manage people will determine your team's level of performance and success.

“You never know what you've got till you watch it”

It's easy for anyone to alter the way they do things in the short run. But unless this change totally fits their personality, they will revert to who they really are over time. Too often, I see people fall head over heels in love with that budding superstar's performance -- only to wonder what went wrong six months later when they've become mediocre. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, *that's* simply who they really are.

“If two people agree all of the time, one of them is useless”

High performing organizations create and then thrive in an environment of candor. Unless you're an ego maniac, you're doing yourself and the company a great disservice by surrounding yourself with “yes men”. You can't possibly see all things at all times; and if you don't make it OK for them to disagree and dialogue with you there's a ditch with your name on it.

“True character comes out in a crisis”

Watch to see how your team performs under fire. Do they take shortcuts or make the tough choice? Are their decisions, no matter the pressure, made for the good of the company? Pressure is never an excuse; but it's a great measuring tool.

“Good communication ain’t always pretty – but it’s always communication”

I’ve had the pleasure of working for and with a ton of great leaders – each with their own style of communicating. They ranged from the subtle to being totally in your face and where I didn’t always like their methods, they were still communicating to me. Therefore, in order for me to be successful I had to look past their style in order to *get the message*.

Knowledge isn’t power until you apply it.”

I’ve run across too many brilliant losers in my life to count. They’re too afraid to make a mistake; they have all the answers and know it all; but they just can’t pull the trigger when it counts. I will always forgive errors of commission, because at least in these cases – someone tried to *do* something. On the flip side, I will always get rid of someone for errors of omission; they knew what needed to be done, but simply didn’t. That is always inexcusable in my mind.

“Size does not equal significance” – Peter Drucker

Of all the things the great Peter Drucker said in his lifetime, this, to me, is one of the most profound. None of the major computer manufacturers took a college kid named Michael Dell seriously when he began selling computers out of his dorm room. By the time they recognized the threat, he held the momentum and became an unstoppable force in his industry. If not you, is there someone in your industry doing something really cool that you should perhaps pay attention to?