

# Being in Business on Purpose

By Paul Cuthbert

I speak with many small and mid-sized business owners that are great people offering great products and outstanding service to their customers, yet they continually struggle to keep their business in the black. These down to earth, know everyone's first name and family member, business owners are the type of people that will bend over backwards for their customers and sacrifice their profits to make the customer happy. Essentially they are giving away the store in the name of customer satisfaction and business loyalty.

From the outside, the business appears to be prosperous servicing large quantities of consumers. The business is often bustling with activity as employees are kept constantly running between projects and customers. However, at the end of the day the business owner sits down to look over the daily receipts and is surprised to see little or no revenue or return for the day's onslaught of activity.

I have a friend that I am constantly reminding that he must be in business on purpose and that purpose is to make money. If you are not in business to make money then you might as well close up shop. Being in business as a help and support to others is a noble and selfless course of action that will bankrupt you faster than you can imagine. Now I am not saying that customer service is not important, to the contrary customer service is the lifeblood of successful businesses that rely on repeat and referral customers. However, I remind you as I do with my friend that if you are a business owner or entrepreneur that you are, first and foremost, a businessperson and you are in business to produce revenues. The type of business that you are in is secondary; how you have chosen to make money and the profession to make money in is up to you and your field of expertise.

Be in business on purpose by letting go of emotional attachment and focusing on what will help the business to generate positive cash flow and steady payments for your services. Most small and mid-sized businesses are started with the notion that the owner can have the best of everything. Time, money and the freedom or liberty to come and go as he or she pleases; yet most business owners find that they are putting in long hours for less money and have greater strain and stress as a result of owning a business. They have become so involved in satisfying the needs of their customers that they forget their reason for taking on the added responsibility of being a business owner--that of making more than if they were working for someone else.

In speaking to my friend I discovered that he has a real passion for gardening, so I explained to him that running a successful business is just like caring for and cultivating a beautiful garden. In order for the flowers to grow and blossom it is necessary to give constant care and attention to the soil and regularly weed out the plants that are choking the flowers. In this case my friend has customers that expend a tremendous amount of time and energy and produce little or no income for the amount of work they receive. By "weeding the garden" and ridding himself of the clients that are choking the business, my friend is able to spend time cultivating the paying clients and working with them to produce the blossoms and fruits that he wants.

I gave my friend the assignment of evaluating each of his customers, using the criteria that he had developed to determine whether his clients were positively producing a cash flow or choking the stream of income. As you nurture your clients they will begin to bloom and grow as your garden does at home.

You must feed and water the plants regularly by nurturing the roots. The roots that are unseen determine what will grow. I am of course speaking metaphorically about the business and clients and I want you to take equal care of your business as you would your garden at home. Establishing a firm foundation of products and services and setting up a business plan for the enactment of your action will serve as a blueprint that you can refer to as your business begins to grow. Weeding out the clients that “choke” the flowering clients and monopolize your time is essential for you to grow your business. At times you will have to roll up your sleeves to do the dirty work in order to see the beauty that will blossom.

In business as with gardening you must be consistently spending time cultivating healthy relationships and caring for your customers. Being in business on purpose is about planting and growing the type of clients or customers that you want to work with, those that appreciate what services and/or products you offer and see the value to them in paying you for your time and effort. Remember why you started your business--to generate an income and be of service to the community and humanity. If you are on track and on purpose you are doing great. If you feel that you are barely scraping by and that your customers are sucking up your time and not rewarding you for your effort it may be time to sit down and evaluate each customer and do some “weeding” so that the clients and customers you do want will have room to come to you and you will have time and energy to devote to them.

If you were a farmer and you plant corn, you would expect corn to grow. If you planted wheat, you would expect wheat to grow. If you plant nothing, expect weeds to grow. Determine what your ideal customer looks like what are their buying habits are, if you are not currently servicing these “ideal” clients then it is time to do some weeding and cultivate your garden so that beautiful, healthy clients may thrive and grow and you will enjoy the fruits of your labor.