

LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLOOM

Play the Whole Game

I'm originally from Philadelphia. If you follow sports at all, you're probably sending condolences my way as you read this. The Eagles are famous for failing to finish a game, or for playing a great fourth quarter after they've dug an impossibly deep early hole. The Phillies regularly string together winning streaks, only to ruin their run with a miserable collapse. So this lesson is in my blood: In both sports and business, you can't take a break. You can't ease up. You can't take your eye off the ball.



Write down your plan to stimulate business during the current week, month or quarter

Let's face reality. It's easier to just "go with the flow" and let business happen to you. But it's not effective. I need you to be really brutally honest with yourself. Stop reading right now and write down what your plan is to stimulate business during the current week, month or quarter. "Sell a lot of stuff" is not an acceptable answer. If you're now looking at a blank piece of paper, you're very much like the vast majority of dealers around the country. Without a plan that you control, you're like a team going on the field without a play called.

In the second quarter of last year and part of the third, I heard the common refrain: "We're not buying anything now while we wait to see what happens in the election." That's like a wide receiver saying, "I'm not going to catch any balls that are thrown my way because I'm afraid someone might hit me!" Putting business on hold while waiting for results that are outside your own control is crazy. I guess about half those people will now put their businesses on hold for the next four years! The right solution would have been to figure that people were getting weary with all the politics and run a "come play guitar to get away from politics" event. Whatever your game plan may be, it cannot be sitting around with your playbook unopened, hoping to survive.

In a broader sense, I've seen this line of thinking regarding the recession we seem to be emerging from. As we start to see the light of day, some dealers are scratching their heads wondering how some select companies have actually grown during this period. Here's the sad answer: While you sat on your hands and followed your "woe is me" business plan, a few really bright deal-

ers decided to not participate in the recession, got very aggressive in their marketing and promotions, bought really smart, and took the business that you left on the table. I'm not discounting the hard times we've been through, but I'm here to tell you that business did not come to a halt. It was there for those motivated to go after it.

When calling on dealers, I use some pretty good CRM software, and I track every conversation. It's eye-opening to go back and look at a couple of years' worth. Where the majority of interactions were variations on the theme of "the sky is falling," the negativity often became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The greatest stars in sports excel because they refuse to fail, they refuse to let anything hold them back, and they won't settle until they win. In your business, there's no shortage of factors to blame for hard times. But the last time I checked, payroll continues, rents are due, utility bills keep coming in ... 12 months per year. You need to plan to win. Schedule an event, sponsor a clinic, find a great deal to draw customers to your store. Just do something other than complain. You may be surprised by how often you score when you keep your head in the game. **MI**

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