

LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLOOM

# Start Your Day Running

**D**o you start your workday like a bat out of hell, or do you ease into it? Do you start so slowly that you play catch-up until bedtime? What about your staff? Do they arrive at work ready to take on the world, or do you need a stick of dynamite to motivate them?

I was a dealer who loved to arrive hours before opening. I quickly learned that the extra hours offered productive time to accomplish things that had alluded me while I was putting out fires, fielding calls and questions, and conducting meetings during regular business hours.



I'm always surprised to find dealers who show up at their stores right at opening time — or worse, later. The most egregious example was a dealer who opened at noon but kept me, one of his employees and three customers waiting on the sidewalk for 15 minutes past opening. Then, he spent much of our meeting time complaining about business and how customers didn't seem to be showing up. Doesn't it make you wonder how much his work ethic and negative attitude contributed to his store's performance? What if he spent a little extra time before opening to write press releases for the local paper?

Your customers are like gold. Keeping them waiting is a mortal sin. They're the reason to start your day running, and early, allowing for cleaning, organizing, planning and preparation for show time when the first person arrives. But there are other reasons, too.

In my mind, the job of a store owner (or manager) simply can't be done in a 40-hour workweek. If you're doing everything that needs doing, you can't possibly be squeezing it all into normal operating hours. I learned that the work of just about any entrepreneurial job exceeds the normal time allocated. Mind you, I believe in balancing work and personal

time, but that balance slices both ways.

Another big reason to work the early shift is the example it sets for employees doing the heavy lifting. When you take the approach that your time at work is an intrusion on things you'd rather be doing, that attitude rubs off on your people, who look up to you as a role model. If you won't go the extra mile as the

key stakeholder, how can you expect anything more from them?

## MOTIVATING LATECOMERS

I found that my work habits rubbed off on my best people. Given an appropriate bellwether, your salespeople will rise to your level or sink to it, if that's the direction you lead them. I struggled for years with a certain group of consistently tardy employees. Some were talented, capable people who had the potential to do even better, given better work habits.

After lots of experimentation, I found a solution. As I've said before, I conducted a mandatory 15-minute pre-opening meeting every day. When the inevitable straggler arrived, it interrupted the meeting and sent a message to everyone else that some people got away with breaking the rules. So, I took those morning meetings out of the main section of my store, where employees and customers entered. I started the meetings precisely on time, allowing an opportunity for brief sales training and announcements. The late-arriving staff got the chance to stand outside waiting for the rest of us, pondering what they'd do the next day to assure an on-time arrival. **MI**

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