

LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLOOM

Giving It 110 Percent

How hard do you work at your business? Do you put in the same amount of effort that you'd like to see from the people working for you? Are you all that you can be?

Twenty-first century business dictates the need to maximize the efficiency of your business. You are rightfully trying to get the most from the fewest people ... insisting that they work at full capacity in order to maximize your return on the investment you make in them. As we fight for every last dollar of profit, we can ill-afford people wasting time or being focused on anything except making money for your company.

The question is: Do you hold yourself to the same standards of efficiency?

Before you decide that this is the article where you will choose to disagree with me, let me share one simple, but embarrassing fact. When I owned my own company, I often described myself as being my own toughest boss. I said it because I believed it. I worked long, hard hours. I never stopped thinking about my business, even when I was at home. There was nothing I wouldn't do for that company.

And then, a funny thing happened. I went to work for someone else, and discovered that I had a whole other level of work ethic. It's not that I put in more hours than I used to, and it's not that I'm any more consumed with the job. But my focus is notably sharper and the efficiency with which I dispatch my work is demonstrably improved. Working for someone else has improved my game and has me working at 110 percent, exceeding what I previously believed was my maximum output.

Here's an analogy that you may find helpful. I remember joining a health club and being trained on all of the Nautilus equipment. Once I finished the orientation, I began working out on my own, and I did it religiously — never letting anything interfere with my routine. I was proud as the weeks and months ticked by, and I was able to increase the weights on each machine. It was remarkable how I was progressing. Then one day, the guy who originally trained me stopped me as I was working on one particular machine. He noticed that I was pulling my elbows in and had shifted my body on the

machine. Once he adjusted my form, I was somewhat shocked to realize that I could no longer lift all that weight, and that my lifting capacity was back in the range where I had started. I was spending a lot of time, but not making a lot of progress ... and really not doing very much good.

What are the equivalent bad habits that you have developed over the years? It's human nature to take the course of least resistance, without much thought for the ultimate impact of such involuntary actions. You're putting in your time, but are you accomplishing your mission? Do you choose to work on internal policies instead of focusing on how to increase profits? Do you default to spending your time speaking with your stock broker or your real estate agent, instead of finding ways to nurture relationships with your customers?

It takes a lot of personal discipline to force yourself to focus on the things that will benefit your business the most, rather than spend your time on the things you prefer to do that may have less impact. But like exercise with bad form, misguided work only wastes time. Investing your time wisely on the things that matter the most will help tone your bottom line. **MI**

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