



RICK HOUCEK
SOAR WITH EAGLES

Business MASTERY

7 STRATEGIES

To Drive Organizational Success

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According to Bloomberg, 8 out of 10 entrepreneurial business start-ups fail in the first 18 months. Wow! That's a whopping high failure rate!

Conclusion? Nothing in business is guaranteed! You put your heart and soul – your blood, sweat, and tears – and your hard-earned cash – or someone else's – into the planning, launching, building, and growing of your dream new business, hopeful of success – and POOF! – 80% of the time, it's dead in a year and a half.

Getting the formula right – and then executing it brilliantly – before you run out of cash, customers or patience – has befuddled many an ambitious businessperson.

In fact, some of the smartest, boldest, richest, and most famous entrepreneurs have business failures in their past. Henry Ford, Bill Gates, Richard Branson, Col. Harlan Sanders, and even Dave Ramsey failed in business – and today he gives financial advice. I could name dozens, even hundreds, more famous businesspeople who have failed. And of the not-so-famous... easily tens of thousands.

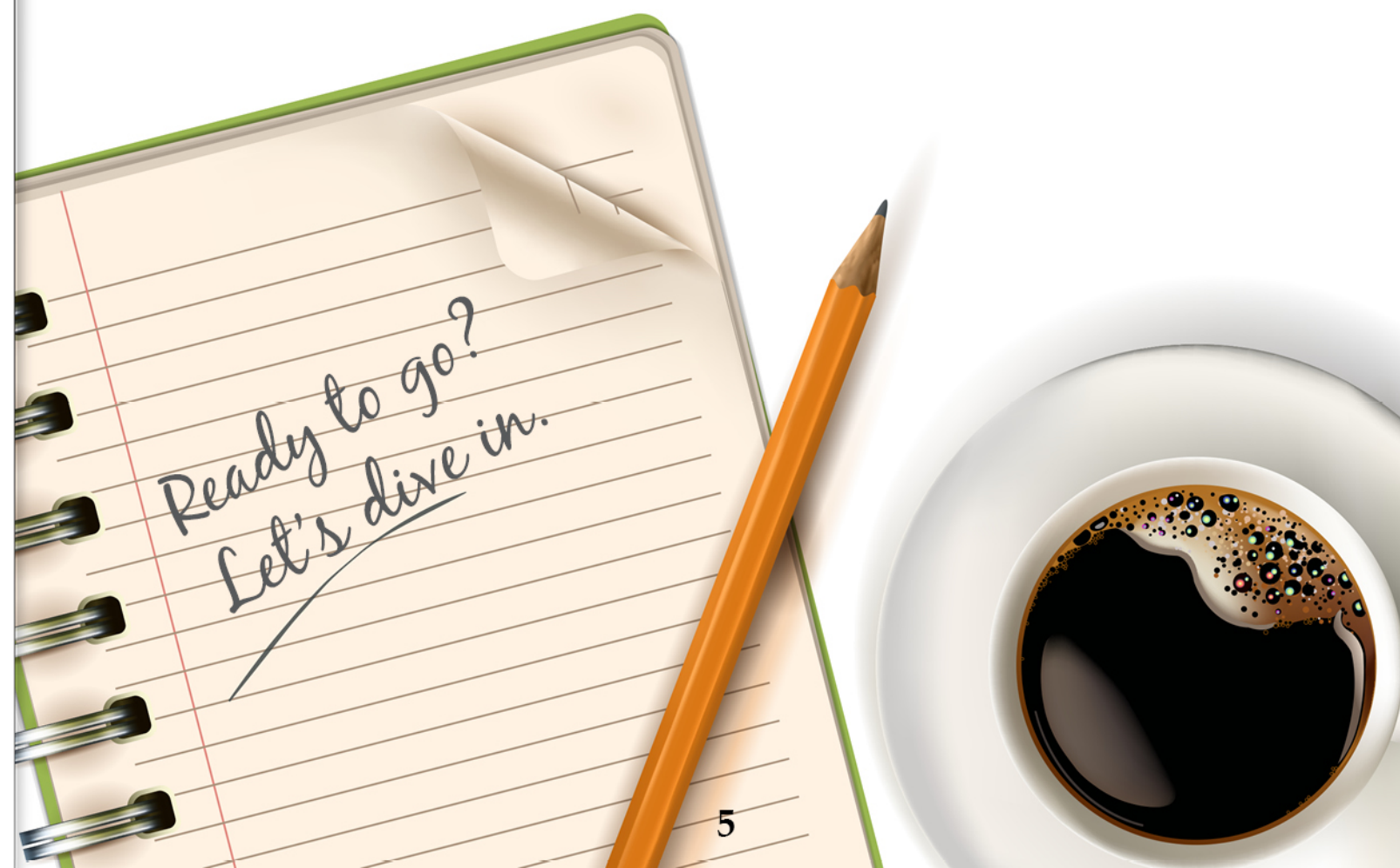
So what does it take to make a business go? Well, I'd like to share with you 7 of the most critical lessons I've learned over a more than 40-year business career. Over 45 if you count my teenage neighborhood lawn mowing business, which did pretty well, by the way.

Hi, I'm Rick Houcek, president of Soar With Eagles. I help ambitious leaders and teams to be successful self-motivated achievers. And today, I'd like to reveal to you, 7 compelling principles the most successful business leaders use every day. For me at least, most of these lessons were learned the hard way.

We'll talk about hiring, marketing, introducing new products and services, creating customer delight, and more.

You can use all 7 of these savvy moves too... and they can help you build your business and avoid costly mistakes.

I'll break it down into 7 chapters, each discussing one critical success point... that you can put into play right away.





- CHAPTER 1 -

THE BEST CLUE TO YOUR COMPANY'S SUCCESS...

STAGNANCY... OR FAILURE.



I'm fortunate to have a crystal clear vantage point from which to assess an organization's health.

I lead multi-day, high-stakes strategic planning retreats of top leadership teams... have worked with more than 110 different companies... and just recently completed my 289th session. That's a pretty big sample size.

I witness elite business leaders in action... see how they interact with each other... hear what they find important... and see what they avoid or are too timid and scared to discuss.

Right before my eyes emerges the good, the bad, and the ugly about any organization. What a privilege to be accepted into these influential inner circles, to lead them, and to help them create aggressive plans that invigorate their businesses. I'm passionate about this.

Long ago, something dawned on me: What happens in these strategy meetings is, perhaps, the single biggest clue to organizational health.

Sure, there are many other clue sources... talking to employees, interviewing customers, attending company functions, reading the trade press... and each is important.

But of all those, leading these retreats, I believe, paints the most vivid and crystal clear picture.

I'm not alone. Patrick Lencioni, in his 2012 book "The Advantage" makes the same observation: "If someone were to offer me one single piece of evidence to evaluate the health of an organization, I would want to observe the leadership team during a meeting."

So let's laser-beam our attention right there.



In the inner sanctum of your leadership team meetings...

Do you relentlessly push for clear decisions... or hold endless, inconsequential discussions that go nowhere?

What subjects do you know need to be discussed... that are being ignored, avoided, and swept under the carpet? Have you brought them up, or are you pussyfooting like the rest?

Is there vigorous debate and respectful disagreement... or does everyone weakly fall in line with the leader, terrified of backlash from voicing a differing opinion?

Is there an intimidator on the team who dominates air time? Why hasn't he been stopped? Why haven't you had a private conversation with him about his disruption?

After a majority decision is made, do the few 'against' agree to eagerly support it, or are they allowed to bad-mouth and

sabotage the decision and remain on the team? If so, why haven't the rest of you cracked down?

Ever caught a team member in a lie? What did you do? Confront... or let it slide?

Do you hold each other accountable to commitments and deadlines... or are you bleeding hearts who cave in to flimsy, teary-eyed, non-legitimate excuses? (I mean accountability with teeth, with consequences that sting.)

Are each of you the shining example of company core values... or the biggest violators?

Is there a consistently underperforming player on your team? Has corrective action been taken? Why is she allowed to stay?

Do you rudely interrupt, cutting each other off in mid-sentence... or listen intently and respectfully?

Do you tolerate cell phones, laptops, tablets, and other electronic distractions... or demand full focus and engagement with all devices shut-down?

Is everyone reliably on time for meetings... or frequently late and allowed to pop in and out at their leisure?

Be brutally honest. How you answer these questions... how your leadership team behaves in meetings... defines your company culture... and offers a clear diagnosis of your entire organization's overall health.

Stop tolerating nonsense. Require... mandate... demand... optimum leadership behavior. Be champions. And settle for nothing less.

Here's a closing Power Thought From Mia Hamm, 17-year player on the U.S. women's national soccer team, 2-time winner of the World Cup, and winner of 2 Olympic gold medals: "I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team, I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion."

Business Success Strategy #1

Be a top gun leadership team for your organization. Set integrity rules like: be on time for leadership meetings... have a clear meeting mission... come prepared... no electronics... listen without interrupting... engage in respectful disagreement and debate... don't just shrivel up and 'go along'... buy-in to team decisions... tell a unified story after... no bullies or saboteurs allowed.





- CHAPTER 2 -

A SECRET TO ENSURING YOU HIRE **GREAT PEOPLE WHO "FIT".**



It's really so simple... but often overlooked... and seldom done.

It's this: Don't assume you can train people to unlearn their bad habits or irritating behavior. Instead, only hire people who already possess and routinely exhibit the traits, habits, and behavior you want.

I see this basic hiring rule broken more frequently than others.

A hiring manager will say...

"Bob's resume matches our job description – so he's got the skills we need – and he interviewed pretty well. Yeah, I know he's got a few unpleasant quirks in his behavior, but what the heck, we'll work with him to get those changed in a few weeks. Let's make him an offer."

WAIT!! That may be a bad deal for both you and Bob... a marriage that could soon end in divorce.

Behavioral problems don't just 'work themselves out' or 'get fixed' in a few weeks. People take years, decades, a lifetime, to become who they are... and unless you're a magician with a gift for making things disappear... you're in for heavy doses of it too.

More importantly, you must accept that YOU cannot change another person. Only HE can change himself. And most people... though they can... won't.



Actions For You:

Best way to prevent the problem – and ensure hiring success – is to have a specific and enforceable list of non-negotiable company values – which, if written correctly, clearly define behavioral mandates and set boundaries on what's acceptable and what isn't.

Then create penetrating interview questions to flush out their actual behavior, not hypothetical. Plus, check references and ask questions about actual behavior.

Just like a component of good parenting is about setting limits for our kids, same is true for effective leadership in a business.

BUT... and it's a big but... NEVER post values or traits or desired behaviors on the wall... and then not enforce them. Have the guts to hold people accountable... and deal with violators. Otherwise, your values are just empty words on paper, but not common, everyday practice, and they'll do more damage than good.

The damage will come in two forms...

First, your employees who are 'eager value compliers' will get angry and may leave, frustrated that intolerable behavior is allowed to prevail and isn't disciplined and stopped.

Second, your leadership ability will be called into question, since it's assumed you know about it, but are ignoring it, or are too weak to stop it.

Worse, because of the power of your position, no one will tell you they question your leadership ability to your face... they'll just quietly stew... and tell disparaging stories about you among themselves.

Here's a closing Power Thought from actress Sharon

Stone: "People don't change their behavior unless it makes a difference for them to do so."



Business Success Strategy #2

Only hire people who fit. 'Fit' is defined as people who already eagerly live the same core behavioral values you require of your employees. They don't need to be convinced or converted. It's who they already are. If they're not, you won't change them.



- CHAPTER 3 -

HOW TO CREATE A CUSTOMER-FOCUSED ENVIRONMENT

IN YOUR BUSINESS.



I recently found my own quickly-scribbled, hand-written notes from an excellent TV interview I saw a few years ago on Good Morning America.

They were profiling the success of The Container Store and talking to CEO Kip Tindell. Solid gold insights!

Four of TCS's standard practices jumped out at me as useful to every business, not just retail.

So listen up – doesn't matter what category of business you're in.

Strategy 1:

Truly & Uniquely Engage Our Customer.

Breaking retail tradition, TCS discourages the standard "May I help you?" greeting that often draws a dismissive "Just browsing" response. They train employees to open with more specific communication about products and special store events, which prompts a two-way dialogue. And since the catalog is the key driver of store traffic, every current campaign is highlighted with a display at the front of the store, so shoppers can find what they came for upon entry.

Strategy 2:

Connect With Our Best Customers.

85% of TCS customers are busy, active women of all ages — college students, young mothers, retirees — so they give their stores a feminine appeal. Wide aisles for carts and kids. Carpeting for warmth. Most popular items at eye level for the average woman's height. Product placement that allows quick in, easy find, quick out. Price tags are their "silent salesperson"... every tag carries information and uses for the product.

Strategy 3:

Create a "Yummy" Corporate Culture.

Yummy is Tindell's word — it's an 'air of employee excitement' he wants customers to "...kind of sense three steps in the door." Invigorated employees create happy customers. Employees receive 240 hours of training, most focused on product familiarity, compared to less than 12 hours at typical retailers. "We put employees before customers," he says, "and they take care of the customer better than anybody else." The payoff: TCS ranked in Fortune's "Best Companies to Work For" 11 straight years.

Strategy 4:

Seek Out Feedback and Act on the Information.

Tindell says "I don't need to hear how great we are again. I want to know what we're doing a thoroughly lousy job of." That's brilliant. Acting on feedback from customers and employees, they streamline service and product selection with 1,500 new products each year.



7 ideas to get you into high gear on all this:

1. Get over the "I'm not in retail, so this won't work for me" baloney. 'Best Practices' ideas often come from outside your category. Figure out a way to make them work for you.
2. Get to really know — and cater to — your best, most ideal, and most profitable customer. Identify target market(s), vertical industry(ies), category specifics, key decision makers, buyer's age, title, education, income, purchasing habits, pain points, etc. — then vigorously install programs, products, services and behaviors to capture that ideal customer's attention, desire, and purchase loyalty.
3. Create a breakthrough greeting. However customers in your industry are typically first addressed, do it differently. Stand out.
4. Magnify and energize all customer "touch points". Identify who touches the customer, how often, in what situations, and with what impact. Use 'role play' to act out actual encounters... and create moments of gold.
5. Over-train employees constantly, every day. School is never out. Don't hire — and do let go — employees who resist. TCS trains employees 20x industry average. Do you?

6. Adopt the mantra: Employees First, Then Customers. It's true... engaged, stimulated, energized employees WILL create delighted customers.
7. Seek feedback continually. From all angles — employees, customers, vendors, media, even employees' families. Say thanks and use what you find. Don't just look for pats on the back. Seek out the dirt, then fix.

In summary: Be an astute leader — identify your success points, install them, institutionalize them, require them, and monitor compliance relentlessly.

Here's a closing Power Thought from Amazon founder and CEO, Jeff Bezos: "We see our customers as invited guests to a party, and we are the hosts. It's our job every day to make every aspect of the customer experience a little bit better."

Business Success Strategy #3

Seek out 'best business practices' from industries outside your own. Then figure out a way to twist and turn them to work for you. The biggest game-changing strategies seldom come from inside the same industry. And since your competitors aren't likely to look outside — you'll stand apart from the crowd.





- CHAPTER 4 -

GOT A NEW PRODUCT IDEA?

HERE'S WHY MOST FAIL.



Let's play a game. I'll give you 4 reasons, and you pick the one for which you believe most new products fail.

1. It's shoddy and seldom works.
2. Price is too high.
3. Takes too long to make or deliver and a competitor beats you to market.
4. The company's reputation stinks.

Now, think and select.

The answer: None of the above.

(Okay, it was a trick question.)

Most of the time, new products fail because of a mistake made even before the product was built, priced, and made available for purchase.

That being...

...the creator doesn't first determine if there is a hot hungry target market already in existence... comprised of people or companies ravenous to have it... who will eagerly part with cash to have it.

And by the way, when I say 'product'... I mean a service too. A service is a product.

If this 'failure' has happened to you, don't blame dumb buyers who 'don't get it'. Blame yourself for not doing your homework up-front.

Here are 3 brilliant examples of homework done up-front...

Walt Disney knew Disneyland and Disney World would succeed because there was already tangible proof people loved carnivals and would eagerly wait in long lines for rides and attractions. But those same people hated the litter, disorganization, and rude employees. So he fixed all those, upscaled the product, even charged more.

The cell phone was bound to be successful because of 2 established facts about people: we were already using telephones (land lines) in high volume... and we crave take-it-with-you conveniences. The demand was firmly in place, so risk was minimal.

Pre-prepared, microwaveable meals were also a sure-thing. For 3 reasons. Everyone's already programmed to eat several meals a day... we like things quickly with little waiting... and we covet no-hassle, made-for-me products. Bingo!

Now, by contrast to Disney, cell phones, and pre-prepared microwaveable meals... here are a couple that went the other way... where the homework was NOT done up-front...

The Mall of America in the Twin Cities nearly failed... almost never got built... because the real estate developers made a basic mistake. They offered to local authorities what would be the nation's largest shopping and entertainment complex, thinking: who wouldn't want that?

The problem:

No one in the Twin Cities was clamoring for such a facility, so skepticism ensued, doors slammed shut, political support eroded.

Translation:

No hot hungry target market.

Solution:

Double-back and create a demand by diligently enlisting a groundswell of support from relevant state and local constituencies by pointing out the benefits to them. Then, re-pitch the idea to decision-makers who now feel comfortable there is a ravenous desire among important influencers.

All of which they did. Expensively.

Result:

It finally got built. But it almost didn't.

Here's another that went south...

Yes, even master inventor Thomas Edison learned this lesson the hard way. According to The History Channel, Edison's

first invention was a device that counted voting ballots. But Congress decided not to buy it because it would kill their favorite pastime: filibusters. Edison's mistake: he assumed – without verifying it first – that of course Congress would want it. Why wouldn't they? Well, they didn't. He decided right then to never again invent or build a new product for which there was no pre-determined market need.

As entrepreneur and best-selling author Seth Godin says, "Don't find customers for your products. Find products for your customers." (Huge difference!)

Actions For You:

Got a new product, new service, or new idea you want to sell? Are you most worried about quality, cost, or delivery? If so, you're worried about the wrong things first.

You must first determine if anyone WANTS it. More specifically, does it solve a pre-existing problem or answer a need people or businesses agonize over and need a solution for? Will anyone actually part with hard-earned cash to buy it? Further, are there enough of them? And will they buy repeatedly?

If not, little else matters... it will likely die. No pre-determined customer need... too high a risk for you.

But if there is a demand, you've passed the first and biggest viability test. THEN focus on the rest. Because you will have already minimized the most daunting peril first.

Here's a closing Power Thought from Orvel Ray Wilson, speaker, consultant, teacher of management development and capitalism at universities worldwide, and co-author of the "Guerilla Selling" series with more than 14 million books sold: "Customers buy for their reasons, not yours."

Business Success Strategy #4

Don't fall in love with a new product or service YOU want to build, create, and offer to prospective buyers, until you've first answered these 'acid test' questions: Does anyone want it? Is there a need? Does it solve a burning problem? Will anyone part with cash to have it? Said another way, it's far less risky to sell a product for which there is a pre-existing demand. Not one you have to expensively create.





- CHAPTER 5 -

DON'T FORGET THE 'OTHER HALF' OF RECOGNIZING PERFORMANCE.



A while back, I was in New Orleans leading a strategic planning retreat for long-time client Thompson Equipment Company.

While speaking with Michael Jackson, one of their top salespeople, he told me how he praises the efforts of his team. Bells rang in my head when he told me the words he uses.

Michael tells them: "If there is no dull and determined effort, there can be no brilliant achievement. I thank you for that – for grinding out those repetitive, sometimes tedious tasks, every day. They are what eventually get us to the end result we want. Thank you."

(The first sentence, Michael acknowledges, is a quote from Chinese philosopher and military strategist Sun Tzu in his classic "The Art of War". He builds on that and adds a master's touch.)

To me, this is a brilliant and often overlooked way to thank employees. So much of what they and we do every day in business can be mundane and unexciting. Oh, the final achievement – the 'touchdown' so to speak – yes, that ignites the explosive fireworks as we celebrate the accomplishment. But everyday tasks leading up to that achievement are often less-than-thrilling, sometimes boring, and seldom noticed.

Michael doesn't wait for the final grand-slam conclusion. Acknowledgement then, though important, is easy and frankly, expected. He recognizes the 'other half' of performance – the daily grind – as equally important. And he tells them so, using powerful words to make his point. I applaud him for this.

And if I were an employee on the receiving end of those words, I would be energized and electrified. And grateful that my daily efforts – not just my wins – were noticed.

Let me repeat the golden words of praise one more time...

"If there is no dull and determined effort, there can be no brilliant achievement. I thank you for that – for grinding out those repetitive, sometimes tedious tasks, every day. They are what eventually get us to the end result we want. Thank you."



Got anyone in your company, on your team, in your house, who never quits on the unexciting routine stuff, and is deserving of mention? Bet you do.

Why let another minute pass? Before this day is out, make a point to go to the important people in your life and gratefully acknowledge – not just their wins – but their

eagerness to engage the dull and determined efforts every day, whether they result in success or not.

Here's a closing Power Thought from William James, psychologist, author, Harvard instructor, and often called the 'father of American psychology': "The deepest human need is the craving to be understood and appreciated."

Business Success Strategy #5

It's easy to acknowledge success, the wins, the final outcome. Keep doing that. And also remember to say thanks for something people seldom get recognized for: the everyday humdrum, monotonous tasks that lead to that final success.





- CHAPTER 6 -

WALK A MILE IN YOUR CUSTOMER'S SHOES.

THEN FIX WHAT'S BROKEN.



In the Atlanta airport, at most all gates, deplaning passengers walk up the ramp, through a door, and into the gate area.

Immediately outside that door is an overhead video screen with connecting flight info.

You can guess what happens. Logjam of people staring up at the screen, blocking the door.

Question:

Who put those screens right there? Answer: Someone who has never walked in the shoes of a customer. Never deplaned a flight in that airport and got caught in the bottleneck. Just 6 or 8 feet to either side would solve it.

Here's another...

Companies that force callers to wade through an irritating string of multiple phone prompts – just to reach 'hold' – then maybe if you're lucky get a human being – have never walked in their customers' shoes. They've never called their own company the way a customer does.

And then there's my nearby FedEx Office store. They can't seem to understand this formula for disaster: a long line of waiting patrons + open unmanned registers + un-busy employees standing around = FURIOUS CUSTOMERS.

At all times, every crew member should be on red alert for backed-up customer lines, sprint to the open registers, eliminate congestion, speed buyers through, and prevent customer frustration.

But they don't – even though I've told the manager multiple times. They're guilty of not walking in the customers' shoes... and ignoring or not caring even when told. They are horribly run, poorly trained, and I'm constantly on their backs. I have a hunch when they see me walk out the door, they uncork champagne and celebrate – instead of fixing the problem.

Most idiotic of all, though, is Rooms To Go. They offer next day delivery. That part's wonderful – and a competitive advantage over others that don't. But get this – here's how they destroy it. If an item is delivered already broken – as happened to my wife and me on two different occasions several years apart – their firm policy for re-delivery of broken items is 10 days.

What?!?! Does that make sense to you? Me neither.

Next day delivery for the original purchase... but 10 days for a broken item that arrived in that delivery?

I politely brought the lunacy of this customer-unfriendly policy to the attention of management – so they're well aware of the imbecilic message it sends customers – yet they refuse to change. They don't care. This defies logic, so I won't even try to figure it out.

A key rule of customer service is this: when you screw up, fixing it leapfrogs to the head of the line and becomes Priority 1.

Walmart founder Sam Walton said it best: "There is only one boss. The customer. And he can fire everyone in the company from the chairman on down simply by spending his money somewhere else."



This is so simple it's almost laughable.

Why not ask your customers: "Can you think of anything we do that frustrates you? Anything your friends, family, or co-workers say about us that frustrates them? We'd sure like to know – and will do our best to fix the problem before you come in again."

You should also be a mystery shopper in your own business or store. Walk in disguised. Or call in and alter your voice. See how you're treated. See how long it takes to get noticed. See if you're serviced with any level of urgency and professionalism and courtesy. Do this frequently. Weekly or daily is not too often. Or hire it done. (There are pros who do this.)

This isn't just for physical locations. It applies to incoming phone calls and web sites too.

There is no alert business that won't find problems to fix. Just lazy ones that refuse to look.

Here's a brutal truth that should frighten and anger you: Every day, your company, your policies, your people are aggravating, enraging, and infuriating your customers – including your most valued, premier, and highest-spending customers – the ones you'd privately admit you can't afford to lose.

It's happening. If left unchecked and unfixed, this won't end well for you. The big question: What will you do about it? Ignore it? Or attack it head-on and fix it? Relentlessly? Constantly?

Why not study companies that are brilliant at delighting, enchanting, and pampering their customers – and model yours to match theirs? Look outside your industry – not at your competitors.

Analyze Ritz-Carlton. Nordstrom. Disney. Southwest Airlines. Zappos. Chick-fil-A. Amazon. Sewell Cadillac of Dallas. There are others.

If you're going to be a strong leader, it means demanding everyone on board delivers a superior customer experience.

Everyone. Your mission is to offer enticing products and services and install policies and procedures that will lure customers in... and bring them back repeatedly... not annoy and drive them away. And any employees unwilling to eagerly deliver this... don't fit.

If you don't mandate this, you're abdicating your leadership responsibility. Hand the reins to someone else.

Here's a closing Power Thought from Jeffrey Gitomer, author and professional speaker: "The biggest question is: Isn't it really 'customer helping' rather than customer service? And wouldn't you deliver better service if you thought of it that way?"

Business Success Strategy #6

The best way to give your customers what they want and deserve, with minimal risk of screwing up is: Walk a mile in their shoes. Literally! Walk the path they walk. In your store, with your people, on your web site. Sit where they sit. See what they see. Touch what they touch. Buy like they buy. Go through the identical motions. It's the only way to see your own stupid mistakes... and fix what's broken."



- CHAPTER 7 -

AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO SOLVE GNARLY PROBLEMS

WITHIN YOUR TEAM.



No team is perfect. Not yours.
Not any team I've ever run. No
team anywhere.

And from time to time, things go awry. Maybe a project goes down the tubes and costs a bundle.

Or you put weeks of late-night effort into a new client pitch... and lose.

Or a new product launches, then fails, in the marketplace.

Whatever the issue... what do you do after a team flameout?

One of our 'human nature instincts' after loss of any kind, big or small, is to get angry, find fault, and point fingers at the idiots who wrecked things.

That sure feels validating.

But for masterful team leaders... that's hardly the path to follow.

In his landmark best-seller "Good To Great", author Jim Collins and his research group found that teams in truly great companies gathered to discuss their problems or failures in meetings he called 'blameless autopsies'.

I love that term. Kind of defines itself, doesn't it? The operative word, of course, is blameless. This critical element – assigning no blame – prevents team members from hiding

the real problems, and makes them comfortable revealing the truth, even the person or people who caused the catastrophe.

Many call these sessions 'post mortems'. Same thing. But adding "blameless" changes the entire tenor of discussion... and separates inspirational leaders and high-performing teams from all the average Joes.



Actions For You:

While it's true your team project may have failed, in part, because of sub-par efforts by some team members... if they walk into this meeting knowing in advance they'll be singled out, blamed, and crucified... then 3 bad things are happening:

1. On all projects, they're skittish and avoid the bold moves it takes to win, for fear of later backlash should it fail...
2. Your autopsies do not reveal the real causes of failure because team members bury the truth to save their skin...
3. Your leadership style, whether you know it or not, is grounded in fear, not 'let's-go-for-the-gold'.

To get the best effort out of your team... to create an eagerness on their part to take calculated risks... I suggest announcing up-front... before the project even begins...

this...

"When this is over, no matter how it ends, win or lose, we'll all gather to hold a blameless autopsy. Hear that? Blameless. I want everyone to know NOW that our purpose in that meeting THEN will be to identify what went right so we can replicate it... and where we stumbled so we can fix it... but we will NOT tolerate finger-pointing at each other. We win as a team, we lose as a team, and we back each other up along the way. We'll never win if each of us is acting out of fear. Any questions?"

Then, keep your promise later. No incriminations, no stone-throwing allowed. It will add rocket fuel to your team's trust, energy, and performance.

Here's a closing Power Thought from Jim Collins in his best-selling book "Good To Great": "When you conduct autopsies without blame, you go a long way toward creating a climate where the truth is heard. If you have the right people on the bus, you should almost never need to assign blame, but need only to search for understanding and learning."



Business Success Strategy #7

To get the most out of your team, create a climate of trust, in which everyone knows that risk-taking is expected, and no one will be singled out and blamed later as the 'fall guy' for failure. Should a letdown happen, those discussions will be handled blamelessly.

Close

Well, there they are... 7 critical strategies for business mastery.

As a quick, condensed review, let's run through all 7 one more time. Here they are...

Business Success Strategy #1

Be a top gun leadership team for your organization. Set integrity rules like: be on time for leadership meetings... have a clear meeting mission... come prepared... no electronics... listen without interrupting... engage in respectful disagreement and debate... don't just shrivel up and 'go along'... buy-in to team decisions... tell a unified story after... no bullies or saboteurs allowed.

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Only hire people who fit. 'Fit' is defined as people who already eagerly live the same core behavioral values you require of your employees. They don't need to be convinced or converted. It's who they already are. If they're not, you won't change them.

Business Success Strategy #3

Seek out 'best business practices' from industries outside your own. Then figure out a way to twist and turn them to work for you. The biggest game-changing strategies seldom come from inside the same industry. And since your competitors aren't likely to look outside – you'll stand apart from the crowd.

Business Success Strategy #4

Don't fall in love with a new product or service YOU want to build, create, and offer to prospective buyers, until you've first answered these 'acid test' questions: Does anyone want it? Is there a need? Does it solve a burning problem? Will anyone part with cash to have it? Said another way, it's far less risky

to sell a product for which there is a pre-existing demand. Not one you have to expensively create.

Business Success Strategy #5

It's easy to acknowledge success, the wins, the final outcome. Keep doing that. And also remember to say thanks for something people seldom get recognized for: the everyday humdrum, monotonous tasks that lead to that final success.

Business Success Strategy #6

The best way to give your customers what they want and deserve, with minimal risk of screwing up is: Walk a mile in their shoes. Literally! Walk the path they walk. In your store, with your people, on your web site. Sit where they sit. See what they see. Touch what they touch. Buy like they buy. Go through the identical motions. It's the only way to see your own stupid mistakes... and fix what's broken."

Business Success Strategy #7

To get the most out of your team, create a climate of trust, in which everyone knows that risk-taking is expected, and no one will be singled out and blamed later as the 'fall guy' for failure. Should a letdown happen, those discussions will be handled blamelessly.

Well, that's all 7.

It's good practice to review these principles several times a week – best done at the beginning of the day – to set your mind right – and anchor your behavior in high performance.

Each principle is a positive affirmation... and a powerful way to set you up for daily success.

**Make your business, your department,
and your team.. the best it can be!**

What in the world is author Rick Houcek up to?

Here's some of what he's done... and is still doing...

- Has led nearly 300 high-stakes strategic planning retreats for small and mid-size companies with his proprietary Power Planning™ Strategic Retreat process
- Delivered more than 600 live keynote and workshop presentations to audiences of all sizes in the U.S., Canada, England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland on high achievement and peak performance themes
- Led/participated in more than 610 CEO and senior executive peer group meetings over 25 years
- Runs his Leadership Excellence Academy for people in charge
- Served more than 460 advertising clients in an 18-year ad agency career
- Authored 11 audio/ebooks
- Co-authored 7 print books
- Writes an ongoing e-newsletter for growth-driven leaders, change agents, and high achievers
- Was president of Ross Roy Advertising, an Atlanta ad agency and division of the \$700 million Ross Roy Group
- Is member of National Speakers Association
- Recognized in Who's Who Among U.S. Executives
- Recognized in Who's Who in Georgia
- Recognized in Who's Who Among American Student Leaders

Attention CEOs:

Are You Operating Without A Strategic Plan?

You're playing blind archery if you are. Worse, there's debilitating confusion among your staff and it's doubtful anyone's telling you. How can they perform in a fog? How can your desired results be achieved when your leadership team isn't bought into a common vision? Here's how to fix it: Rick Houcek leads strategy retreats for small & mid-size businesses using his dynamic Power Planning™ process. His Escape-Proof Accountability™ system overcomes the crippling effects of lousy execution – the single biggest cause of plan failure. Everyone leaves on the same page. For details, visit www.SoarWithEagles.com. Be sure to read the priceless praise from prestigious CEO clients about value they gained.

Attention Managers:

Looking For An Innovative Way To Grow Your People?

Consider bringing in Rick Houcek's dynamic "Self-Motivation For Winners" personal goal workshop for your employees. This is 'life planning' at its best – not business goal setting – and it assures staff members you care about them, their families, their lives. Invite spouses too. For details, go to www.SoarWithEagles.com.

Attention Meeting Planners:

Need a High-Energy Speaker For Your Next Conference?

Could your team use a jolt of inspiration? How about content-rich, battle-tested ideas on leadership excellence, self-motivation, winner behavior, or personal goal setting? Why not bring in Rick Houcek to speak at your annual meeting, team offsite, or industry conference? For topics and information, go to www.SoarWithEagles.com. Read what clients have said about value they gained — their words are gold!



A wee bit more about Rick...

Rick Houcek's singular company purpose is: To provide high-octane, world-class strategic planning systems for business and life, helping top gun leaders, teams and individuals to succeed 'on purpose, most of the time,' rather than 'by accident, some of the time.'

A University of Missouri graduate, Rick has 4 fanatical life passions: family, health/fitness, helping others prosper through his business and friendships, and playing competitive baseball.

Rick Houcek

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