

Talking Technology

Understanding the principle-centred business plan

By Steve Burns, Capital News contributor

Whether you are in a technology business or not, it is often useful to take the time to re-evaluate the principles upon which your business is based.

I have been taking the time recently to talk with a number of entrepreneurs about where their businesses are now and how they see the future.



Here are some guiding principles that I have gleaned from the entrepreneurs on their top three principles that they are striving to base their businesses on:

The Principle of Life

Entrepreneurs need to step back away from the hustle and bustle of everyday business detail and ask themselves some hard hitting questions.

For example, is your business everything you meant it to be?

On a scale of one being awful to 10 being awesome, entrepreneurs rated their businesses on average as a four.

Very honest and blunt feedback.

Almost all of the entrepreneurs that I spoke with started their business with the hope of being able to enjoy the lifestyle that the Okanagan affords.

But all too often the business actually sucks the life out of them.

So what needs to change to get them back to the life that they wanted to create when they first started their business? Their number one suggestion was to decrease the business' dependence on them, which included taking the time now to enjoy the Okanagan lifestyle—even when they can't really afford to.

For instance, one entrepreneur set a plan in place to decrease the number of days that she worked during the winter so that she could exercise, go skiing or do whatever she wanted to.

No cell phone, no way to communicate with her at all.

The result was that the business survived and thrived without her being there.

Her team loves their new found freedom.

While we all may agree that your business should be a way to get more of what you want out of life, it is often challenging to make this happen.

Perhaps by implementing the Principle of Life on a daily basis, you can create a business that frees you to do the things that give you the lifestyle that you crave.

The Principle of Leadership

Leadership can be boiled down to three key elements: vision, action and spirit.

Vision in the entrepreneur's dream for the future, what the business will be like when it is fully developed.

Action is what the entrepreneur does and how they behave.

Spirit is the entrepreneur's attitude— how they do what they do.

It is about having a positive outlook, being alive and full of energy, having contagious enthusiasm and inspiring others.

Perhaps entrepreneurs are too critical of themselves but they rated themselves a five out of 10 on the leadership scale.

Many felt that they were not providing the leadership in their business that they wanted to.

It was disheartening to hear the sense of failure that they felt.

I liked the idea of one entrepreneur. Instead of focusing on where they haven't demonstrated leadership, they took a day with their team to look at where they and their company have demonstrated leadership in the last year.

They were surprised to learn that while there were areas to improve upon, their team did find positive leadership examples where they could celebrate their successes.

The Principle of Business Development

Some would say that if you are doing the technical work of a business, you do not really have a business, you have a job.

While I agree that the ideal scenario is for all entrepreneurs to work ON their business, rather than IN their business, a balance is necessary.

Another great idea by an entrepreneur: They declared one day a month as their "business development day."

They brought their team together and looked at what is working now, what they could improve and how they could implement the ideas.

The entire team was fired up. They were able to prioritize their ideas and find the time to implement some of them.

Perhaps a little too ambitious at first, they agreed on the three action items for each of them to implement by the next meeting.

According to this entrepreneur it's important to, "focus on ideas that can be implemented by your team."

So what are the principles that your business is based upon?

I can think of another one – the Principle of Giving Yourself a Break: while you want to improve your business, be careful to not be so hard on yourself.

Celebrating successes along the way and making incremental improvements can help you become more successful.

Next Week: Inside Access Reservation Systems.

Steve Burns, CA, CMC, CFP, is the president and CEO of the Burns Innovation Group Inc. If you would like your technology company profiled in the column, contact Steve at 763-4716 or e-mail him at

steve@burnsinnovation.com.