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The Wasp in the Window

Ushering in Church one Sunday, I observed a wasp fighting furiously to exit via a side window, separated from the open door by a six-inch support structure. The wasp repeatedly assaulted the pane, buzzing furiously in frustration. When the service ended and the congregation exited, a blast of air blew the insect backwards for several feet. The route to freedom now visible, the wasp escaped.

It was an enlightening observation creating a troubling analogy. Frequently in business while dealing with a constant flood of variables and preoccupation, the big picture becomes lost. The subtle shifts in behavior go unseen and the power of paradigm shifts propel us along into unexpected opportunities and minefields.

American business is still shaking off the recession, where belts were tightened, cash flow watched like a hawk, and investments judiciously controlled. The objective was survival and growth in a hostile environment. The future for American commerce shows signs for optimism and a moment of reflection will help refocus on the reasons for being in business.

Last year, I had the good fortune to spend two days with several hundred entrepreneurs. The attendees were multi-racial and from every conceivable background. They were involved in business enterprises from primitive to super high technology. Groups gathered, small and large, without regard for any differences, to discuss ideas and activities. Entrepreneurs with fifty years of experience helped novices, and high tech people worked with low-tech startups. Any idea was worth exploring, and collaboration was not some nebulous term, but the pathway to success.

Attendees went out of their way to introduce people with common interests. In participative meeting, and commenting on materials presented, all were brutally honest but positive and helpful.

8/13/2013



1

The two days were memorable, functioning in a world of total equality where everyone respected each other. In addition, there was a great deal of laughing, joking, and just enjoying each other's company without the social baggage.

The amazing point about these people is they are a microcosm of a day-to-day world filled with distrust, racial tensions, and political warfare - all areas of conflict. Yet, for this moment in time, they have risen above it.

How did this group of extraordinary entrepreneurs avoid this turmoil?

The answer is straightforward. They shared three common goals - build a successful business, make it grow, and invest in the future to grow ever larger. Pretensions are a luxury none could afford. Distractions were a waste of time. We talked about failures and lessons learned. It is implicit among entrepreneurs that success and failure are part of growth. Every entrepreneur knows how to take responsibility, and have the courage to get up and try again.

There are numerous reasons for working, from necessity to a dream, but most people work to make money to support families and priorities. The pursuit of passions is important, but without money, probably not obtainable. The concepts for personal solvency and actualization are the same as for business.

Some people in our society argue that money equates to corruption, but everyone needs it. There is an argument about how much individuals have (rich vs. poor), and redistribution, but these are discussions dealing with social and monetary policy. Money is neutral, neither good nor evil, while having the potential to be used for any purpose. Money is a tool to achieve dreams and increase the quality of life. Without money and solvency, there are no alms for the poor.

In September, The Focused Fire Newsletter will examine business fundamentals from a more detailed perspective. For now, we know the wasp escaped to an unknown future, but it was free to pursue its goals. We observed people putting aside complicated differences for a common cause. We know that money is a tool and success is a reason to celebrate. By breaking artificial constraints, we can concentrate on building our businesses by excelling at the fundamentals.

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8/13/2013



2