PERSONAL GROWTH | PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Arenas of Success

Customer satisfaction is a simple value that a business may hold. What a company values will affect the way the business runs and the employees act and work, so it is important to know what your business values are.

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"The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly." -- Theodore Roosevelt

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In this article we are going to be looking at the "Arenas" that every person, organization, or business can operate out of. They are Values, Responsibility, Possibility, Negotiation, Vision, Dedication, and Accomplishment. The degree of our success is directly related to the degree in which we excel in and balance these arenas. As you go through each segment, think practically, because these are intended to be more than intellectual ideas. They are intended to help you solidify them into your life and turn your potential into performance. Though this article is specific to business and industry, the principles here are easily translated into personal application.

I Am - The Arena of Values.

Every person, organization and business has values. They may not know what they are, or they may not be able to articulate what they are, but they have them. The values of a business are what they believe in. What do they think is important? What do they hold as dear to the organization?

> ***Customer satisfaction is a simple value that a business may hold, for example. What a company values will affect the way the business runs and the employees act and work, so it is important to know what your business values are.***

Here are some questions for you to ask. I would encourage you to involve as many top-level people in this process as possible, as well as others, even down to the lowest levels of the organization.

What do we think is important? What do we hope to accomplish? What do we believe in as we go about our work?

Another item to deal with is *Values Dissonance*. That is when you state your values and find that they are not in action in the company. This then, takes teamwork and leadership to make sure that everybody is on the same page with your corporate values.

The first step in a successful organization, or for your own life for that matter, is to determine your values. I would encourage you to spend some time on this if you haven't already. And if you have, continue to make sure that everybody in the organization knows and believes in them.

Two excellent books on the subject are *Leadership Jazz*, and *Leadership Is An Art*, both by Max DuPree.

Is there clear indication in your place or work that you are operating in the Arena of Values? Can you say without a doubt that "I Am," or "We Are"? Hopefully you can, and if not, you can be, with a little work.

I Should - The Arena of Responsibility

I understand that responsibility is, in some people's minds, a four-letter word, but not in those who want to achieve true, lasting success that benefits not only themselves, but a great number of people around them.

> ***Those who would lead the way to accomplishment must also understand that they have responsibilities. And the man or woman of honor, integrity, and success, lives up to those responsibilities.***

So what are these responsibilities that we must live by? While I want to encourage you to think about them specifically for your own life and business, there are a few that I believe are for all of us.

1. To be a person and company of high integrity. Ultimately, we are only a success to the degree that we are honorable people. This means that we are honest, hard working, and forthright. I don't think it matters how much money one accumulates if the are not a person of integrity.

2. To live by the "golden rule." And the golden rule isn't what one of my best friends grew up thinking it was: He who has the gold, makes the rules! No, it is that we will treat others as we want to and expect to be treated.

3. To our families. Regardless of the work we do, it is of utmost importance that our families sit atop the priority list. Sometimes I think of all the people I help and work so hard for day by day and realize that none of them will be at my side when I breathe my last breath. My wife and children will fill those spots. Therefore, they get the most from me. I owe it to them. They are important to me and it is my responsibility to be there for them, no matter what my opportunities are elsewhere.

4. To give to charity. The more you hear from me, the more you will realize that I am big on the idea of charity. I think one of the things that rounds us out as healthy, successful people is to give away money, time,

and possessions, free of all strings. Simply give it away to a cause that you believe in. Make it big. Make it a sacrifice. Instead of a $10 check every now and then, put it into your budget to give away a certain amount every month. At first you will think it is impossible but it will come around. And one of the great benefits to this is that at the end of your life, you will be able to look back and see the difference you have made.

These are just a few areas, but they are the umbrellas that cover the rest of our lives. If we get these right, we are 95% there.

I Could - The Arena of Possibility

Now we cover the arena of possibility.

It seems to me that many businesses, and schools and organizations often get so caught up in the day to day that they lose their zest for life. They get the nose to the grindstone, and may even be doing important work, but they forget to dream. They forget to think of what could be. (for more on achieving your dreams, see my article *"Dare to Dream Again"*) How is your business in the arena of possibility? What would happen if at your next staff meeting, whether you have 30 people or it's just you and your partner, you asked the question "What could we really do if we put it all together? If we really stretched ourselves as far as we could?" Or how about "What are the possibilities for this business to really do something great or dynamic?"

I think that you would probably be astounded at what you would hear. People have great ideas, dreams, and possibilities inside of them. They just need someone to stop the treadmill and ask the question, surrounded by an atmosphere of acceptance.

Here are some areas to think about possibilities in:

The office atmosphere
Customer relations
Customer satisfaction
Increased sales
Increased profit
Community service projects

I Would - the Arena of Negotiation

After you have recognized your corporate values, understood your responsibilities and then had your staff possibilities session, there comes a time of reflection upon those possibilities.

Every possibility has a cost associated with it. At this point an organization not only says "we could" but they also need to determine what the cost will be and whether or not the successful implementation of the possibility is worth the cost. This is the arena of negotiation.

It isn't negotiation in the traditional sense of the word, such as negotiating a price with a client or vendor, but is primarily an internal negotiation. This is where you ask qualifying questions. "I would if..."

If this is to come about, what will the cost be? Is it worth it? If this comes about, what will the ramifications be in other areas of my business? What other adjustments would have to be made, and are they worth it? What would the reward have to be in order for me to pursue this possibility? How long will it take me to reach this possibility? In light of that, do I want to readjust the organization for that period of time? In other words, would the outcome be worth it? What trade-offs will I have to make with my time, finances, staff, customers, or family? Are these trade-offs worth it?

These are all examples of negotiation questions. You are negotiating internally, with yourself or your staff.

For example, you may find that your possibilities include substantially more profit for an extra five hours of your time per week. But your family life may be such that it wouldn't be the overall best situation for you to increase your workload five more hours a week at this point in your life. Perhaps it is still a possibility, but should be delayed for a year or two You may see the possibility of giving better customer service by adding two new employees, to bring the ratio of employees to customers down.

What would the cost be? What would the reward be? Perhaps you will find out that the reward, be it financial or otherwise, is more than

sufficient in your mind to spur you on to pursue the possibility. You may want to get a comprehensive view of your current customers' satisfaction.

There is any number of ways to go about obtaining that information. Giving a response card to each person that visits. Calling past customers on the phone. Visiting each client personally. What are the costs of these? Which ones are right for you and your staff at the current time? Every possibility has a cost associated with it. Take some time this week to measure the costs of your possibilities. Then, when you find those that are good for you - go for it!

I Want To - The Arena of Vision

Sometimes one of the best ways to determine what you or your company or organization should do is what you want to do! A sections back we asked what the possibilities were for your business. We decided to dream a little. Now, of those possibilities, what ones would you really like to do? The reason for this is simple:

> ***Because those ideas that stir our passions for excellence become things that we can easily "see." They can become our "vision."***

Vision is a word that is used a lot in leadership development these days, and for a good reason. In order for something to happen, someone has to first see it happening long before it actually does. Sure, there are lots of things you could do (possibilities), but what do you want to do? What can you see yourself doing? If money, and time, were no object; if you knew that you couldn't fail at your attempt; what would you want to try? Then, why not try? This can become your vision. And a vision is a powerful thing. Vision is what drives success and accomplishment. Just think of the great accomplishments of mankind and about what vision must have been behind them. So, what do you want to do in your life? What would you like to accomplish with your business or organization? Great things come when we dream, when we gain a vision of a better tomorrow. Vision drives us to attempt things far beyond where we are right now. Here is one of my favorite quotes from old Rough and Ready, Teddy Roosevelt. I hope it encourages you to stretch for greater things.

> *"Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits*

who neither enjoy, nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat."

I Will - The Arena of Dedication

They say that the three most important things in real estate are "location, location, location." That may very well be true, but I have decided, after being involved in numerous start-up ventures (both for profit and non-profit) that the three most important things in work, especially during the start-up process, are "perseverance, perseverance, perseverance."

> ***I have come to believe that much of what separates the successful from the unsuccessful is simply determination.***

The successful are not always the brightest, the best looking, or those with the most prestigious diplomas. Instead, they are the ones who say *"I will do this!"* and *"Hardship will not deter me!"* These people have entered into and continually live in the arena of dedication. Staying there long enough usually puts them on top. Dedication is a key to success.

So far, we have had you determine your corporate values, and had you dream and think of the possibilities for your life, work, and organization. What now? Hard work! Once you and your staff have determined what your possibilities are, you should also spend some time to recognize all of the hard work that will be involved in achieving your dreams. Then spend some time preparing to meet the challenges. Here are some questions to help you get through the process, prepare yourself for the job ahead, and come out on the end of success.

1. What are the obstacles we will face?
2. How will we overcome those obstacles?
3. What kinds of attitudes and dedication will we need to exhibit when the time comes to face difficulties and up-hill battles?
4. What are the rewards our dedication will bring to us as individuals and corporately?

Focusing in on these questions will help you prepare for the times when you will need to show dedication, perseverance and inner fortitude. The mental preparation now will strengthen you to succeed later.

I Do - The Arena of Accomplishment

As we close this series, it is important to remember that these phases are all constantly rotating through different areas of our lives. In some areas we will be in the values formulating arena, others the dedication arena.

> ***And of course we will at times be in the accomplishment arena. It comes when the job is complete.***

What is important at this stage? Well, a few things actually.

1. A little rest. Notice I said a "little." It isn't time to sit back for good, but resting can be a much-needed reward for all of the hard work you have shown up until now. After the pace of pursuing your dreams, your body and mind need some well- deserved rest.

2. A little celebration. Celebrations are great for us. What is all the work for if one can't enjoy the fruit of his labor? Maybe it is a small dinner out. Maybe it is a huge celebration like a party for a hundred of your closest friends and business associates. Maybe it is an exotic vacation?

3. A sense of fulfillment. The greatest reward is, as the old saying goes, "the satisfaction of a job well done." Not many people make it to the accomplishment arena very often. Enjoy the satisfaction!

4. A new high bar. One of the great things about life is the challenge of new heights. You have accomplished your task, and that's good, but... Now, What's Next?

Chris Widener is an example of how anyone can overcome any odds to achieve a successful life and help others achieve the same. Chris has overcome many obstacles... living through his father dying suddenly when he was four, being sent away from his family to live with relatives at age nine and becoming involved with drugs and alcohol by the age of twelve. Chris overcame those obstacles and has for the last ten years worked with some of the most financially successful families in America, helping them to achieve both personally and professionally. Now he can do the same for you!