



By Daniel E. Beardslee, LS

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Discipline and Confidence

What does discipline—particularly self-discipline—have to do with good business? Discipline begets confidence.

When modeled and planned, these two qualities provide subtle keys that will help to make your business more successful. Like fishing, investing money, or a thousand other examples, there is no single key that unlocks the door to success. Success is the result of daily efforts. As David Rockefeller put it, “Success in business requires training and discipline and hard work. But if you’re not frightened by these things, the opportunities are just as great today as they ever were.”

Sports stars often describe how confidence makes a big difference in how they play. When they lack it they play poorly and when they possess it they play well. In sports and business alike, confidence arises from a series of successes, and at the root of such success is discipline. Many elements of successful business enterprise require discipline—mostly self-discipline. Consider the following keys that will help you exercise discipline and enhance your business:

- Return every single call, good, bad or indifferent, as soon as humanly possible. Be polite, responsible, and professional—every single time!

- Whenever you say you will do something, no matter how minor, do it! And do it every single time without exception.

- When a problem arises, deal with it immediately and do so consistently. Problems won’t fix themselves; they won’t go away, and the older they are the worse they become and the harder to fix.

- Give clients an update on their projects whenever it’s appropriate. Call them when something happens that affects them. This will indicate that you care

about them and their projects.

- Whenever you anticipate that a client may call about anything—billing, work schedule, whatever—call them *before* they call you. Be proactive.

- Never, ever offend someone in a business situation. When you offend someone, it extends to at least 250 other people—their friends, their acquaintances, their friends’ acquaintances, and so on. You can’t afford to offend 250 people.

It takes a great deal of discipline to deal with a problem as soon as possible. It takes discipline to not compete with yourself, and it takes discipline to return all calls right away. It takes even more discipline to call someone before they call you, particularly if there is a problem involved. Practice makes perfect. Keep trying, and practicing and you’ll get good at it. Get good at it and you’ll be perceived as a reliable, exem-

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- Always make sure you and your client are absolutely clear on what your business relationship entails. A written contract is the best, but in the absence of a contract, make absolutely sure that there is no misunderstanding as to who will do what and who will pay whom how much and when.

- Always deliver your services as soon as possible. Do not put off a project for any reason when it can be done sooner rather than later.

- Never compete with yourself. When you determine what a fee should be, stay with it and don’t discount it for fear that it might be more than the prospect expects, or that it might be lower than what the “competition” will do the work for. It’s an easy trap to fall into. When you rationally estimate a fee, there is no good reason to reduce it because of speculation that other forces would require such a reduction.

So what do all these little things have in common? Discipline.

plary professional. When you are perceived as an exemplary professional, you will be talked about as such and treated as such. When you are treated as such, you will gain confidence and realize that all those keys paid off, which in turn, will inspire you to try even harder! The better you get, the more your reputation will grow, and your confidence will peak.

If you are a small operation, *you* are the focal point. The way you are perceived is the biggest single influence on your business success. Your ability to be disciplined and thereby confident will make an enormous difference in your financial success. If you are part of larger organization, this discipline and the confidence that results, needs to be inculcated into your company culture. That’s leadership.

So if you don’t have self discipline, get it. It’s just a matter of discipline, after all. Discipline begets confidence; confidence begets success; and success breeds more discipline. It’s a nice circle. *A*