



## What Your Struggling Business is Dying to Tell You

**A Word of Caution:** If you think your business revolves around you. This article may offend you.

When the bottom fell out of the construction industry in 2007, I wrote an article that stated we would see an immediate colon cleansing of many construction businesses. This was not a difficult statement to make since I understood one major thing. Contractors have great construction skills, but possess poor business skills.

Let me explain.

At one time or another, we all fail to perform as well as we can. Once we taste success, more money, better lifestyle, or growth, we get complacent. In fact, we sometimes get downright egotistically stupid. Especially, in a robust economy when getting work is no problem because there is such an abundance of it. We actually believe we created the success for ourselves; no one else had anything to do with it.

Then, we fall deep into a trap. And I mean deep. We start to believe our business revolves around us. At that point, we've set ourselves up for a major reality check, and the nature of business is always willing to oblige us.

However, that is not how it works.

Business is all about raising the bar, constantly, driving your business to new heights. Owning a business means you must subscribe to the process of constant and never-ending improvement. If you do not, you will get left behind.





Since all change is incremental, you can dramatically improve your managerial skill set, including your perspective, approach and style, at anytime you desire. All you need to do is come to terms with the reality of your present limits, and be willing to expand your restrictive envelop.

Now, here's the flip side of the coin:

If you refuse to deal with this, refuse to see the early-warning signals that are blasting their caution at you, you are effectively sabotaging your own business. Doesn't make sense does it? Unfortunately, it is true, it is exactly what happens, and you need to realize this.

However, for our understanding, let's focus on the early-warning signals. The one's that give you a precept of what is coming at you full sped.

Here's what happens.

Just as you think you've reached the pinnacle of success, you get complacent. You effectively take your hands off the steering wheel of your company vehicle. Blinded by overly enthusiastic pats on your own back, you become contented. Because the first signs are modest dips in sales and/or profits that barely register on your Richter scale, it hardly resembles an on-coming train wreck. You chalk it off to a temporary blip or a harmless hiccup.

Then, things persist. They don't get better too soon. At that point, it's easy to blame the economy, heck, everyone does. You might even blame it on the competition or some other factor beyond your control. And it is always blamed on something beyond your control.

Meanwhile, your business continues down its slippery slope as a week turns into a month, and the months quickly into years. And before you know it, because you failed to acknowledge you needed help, that you were at your limit of existing managerial skills, the slippery slope turns into disasterville.





If your company is a little bigger, it sometimes can postpone the inevitable a little longer. Unless, of course, if your overburdened with debt. If you're fortunate to have a larger financial cushion however, you can delay the doomsday scenario that is careening out-of-control at you. However, don't take solace in this since it is only a disguise of the fact that the business is spiraling downward, the victim of your ego.

This takes us back to the initial reason why you even started your business in the first place. It was because you wanted either financial freedom or freedom of lifestyle. As your business approaches the bottom, it hardly seems to be a worthy mission statement any longer, doesn't it. Instead of creating that vision or dream, you created a job for yourself. You put in the long, hard hours, tons of risk, and very little money for your efforts. The only problem is, you're feeding on yourself and the pickings are getting mighty slim.

You can change this around, if you want. Let me explain.

I know from talking and working with so many business owners, this is the most difficult undertaking that they have to face. The realization that they need help, advice or an easy to follow step, right now . . . not later, that will put them on the right track. I've seen many reach out and then find some lame excuse for not doing it. Some are so wrapped up in their day-to-day chaos that they created themselves, they can't find the time. For others, they're afraid to make the investment. However, the nature of business isn't very kind. The inevitable is only being pushed temporarily out of your mind, but not out of your reality.

Let's strain this through a coffee filter (of sorts).

If you really serious about owning a successful construction business (and like I pointed out, not creating a job for yourself), you have to come to terms with the obvious fact that you must improve your business skills, in other words, fire yourself from your hourly worker job, and hire yourself as the manager of your business. And that, brings us to the next important question you need to answer:





*“Would you hire yourself with your present limited business management skills, to run your business, turn it around, or make it successful, or seek someone better qualified?”*

I rather expect you wouldn't hire yourself; you would seek the better qualified person.

**A business-model innovation is required for your business.**

You have to face the facts. Either your skills are not what they should be, or your business model doesn't work anymore. This blunt claim won't be far from wrong. It is one or the other. Let's face it, even if the model worked before, today isn't yesterday anymore.

Every business is forced to change its business model to meet the ever changing times. It's impossible to survive by not doing it.

That also means you must change or improve your present managerial skills, so you can overcome your hurdles, attack your goblins, and slay your dragons ... because every day you play Mr. Rogers, they're winning and you're losing!

**Think of it as your early-warning system that has flipped to a Code Red!**

Building a successful construction business is complex, and there are always factors that lie beyond your control. Without some outside help, you've stacked the deck against yourself. You've set yourself up for imminent failure.

Another mistake a lot of business owners make is this. They make EVERYTHING overly complex. It's as if they are fascinated with complexity.





This leads us to the next crucial element.

It's a big one. It's easy to avoid, yet everyone falls prey to its crushing grasp.

*The scene falls out like this ...*

Instead of mastering the managerial skills one-by-one, perfecting them, implementing them, monitoring them, and perfecting them, they grab anything that appears to them to make their problem disappear quickly.

They grab some useless 'thing' that they heard about, read, or was told, maybe even messing it up with some other method under the sun, like applying a Band Aid on a deep cut that needs stitches, and thinking they've solved their problems.

When you apply Band Aids on every problem in your business, you end up fixing nothing at all.

And it doesn't matter how great your construction skills are, or how much cheaper you're willing to work, or how many hours either, you've spread yourself too thin and you can't manage or build a successful business on a foundation that is structural unsound to begin with.

### **Your Double Edged Sword**

To be successful in business, there are certain rules and knowledge that must be known, perfected and skillfully applied. However, you must be willing to invest the time to know them and master them if you're serious about making your business a success.





The top edge of the sword is realizing that something is wrong and being willing to face it and understand it. You need to open your eyes and come to terms with what is working, and what isn't. It is one thing to be a hands-on manager, another to be able to put your finger on the problem.

But that is only half the equation.

The second edge is being able to find out what works. Until you're willing to accept you don't know, you can't even be able to start finding out what does work. Until you can, you'll keep spiraling downward while scratching your head wondering why.

The good news is, once you get it – When you really understand it, your results will improve immediately.

Sounds easy enough, right? So will you sabotage your success, or face your obstacles head-on?

Look, self-doubt is natural – but when it prevents you from achieving the success you deserve it's downright unnatural . . . it's a major problem!

So there you have it. If your business could tell you, this is what it would say. Are you listening?

Are you going to do something about it, or let it do something to you? The choice is yours.

