

Chris's Corner: Don't Lose Your Focus

I have been creatively tapped out for a month or so and didn't get around to writing a blog last month. Typically something in the real world has to give me a spark and inspire me. Well a series of small events has gotten me to thinking about an idea or trap that many small businesses may getting caught in.

The whole purpose of running a business, first and foremost, is to make a living and provide for yourself and your family. This, obviously, is not the only factor taken into consideration, but at the end of the day, for most people who aren't independently wealthy, it is the bottom line.

You can go about this in any successful manner in which you see fit, but my point is that you can't get wrapped up in the game of doing business. What I mean by this is that it isn't the process, the equipment, the technology or the doing business thing of it that is foremost; it is serving a market, providing a product or service to your customers and making a profit.

I am a small operator. I have come to realize that if I get sidetracked in being the best business person, with the best practices and procedures and following all the latest theories on how to run a business, it doesn't necessarily translate into profit.

Focusing on your core competencies, on your customers, your products and your service on a consistent basis is what matters.

Having GPS in my vans, equipping every employee with the latest smart phone or computer technology does not guarantee success. For every investment in technology there is a cost and there is a return on investment.

Me spending \$2,000.00 or more in a new desktop computer to replace my 10 year old HP running Windows Vista Profession is not necessarily going to make me money. What is driving my need to upgrade? Is there some new software I need that is incompatible with my system and will generate greater productivity for me and, thus, allow me to spend more time on customer driven activities? If so, yes, it is a good investment.

Too many businesses get caught up in playing business with all the latest toys and theories and lose focus on the end goal; sales to customers at a profitable margin. This also means taking into account overhead and operating expenses.

I'd rather pay a top employee top dollar than to make sure my fleet is all new vehicles.

Another big fallacy is writing off stuff. You buy a new van for \$30,000 to save \$4,000 in taxes; you'd better need the van because you still spent \$30,000. Maybe you'd be better served with \$26,000 in bank or no debt? Big trap.

My point is to see what works for you. Don't throw the baby out with the bath water. You don't have to be an early adopter of anything. I prefer to let others do that for me; let them be the crash test dummies. If it is proven to work and it is a fit for me, I can invest in it later, often at lower prices and better results.

Don't get caught up in playing business; do business.