Keep Your Eye on Your Business Triangle

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Summary

We all learned in elementary general science class about the Fire Triangle. A fire requires Heat, Oxygen and Fuel. Without sufficient Heat or Oxygen a fire cannot start or continue to burn. Without Fuel there is nothing to burn and the fire will extinguish itself.

Your business also requires certain elements to start and to continue. Michael Gerber in his book, [The e-Myth Revisited] [2], presents three roles necessary for a successful business venture. Without someone wearing each of these hats a business likely will not succeed.

Entrepreneur

The Entrepreneur role is often assumed to be all that is required to be a successful business person – hence the book title e-Myth. “He (or she) is such an entrepreneur! The business is going to be so successful”! Not so fast. This person is the visionary who sells his/her ideas to investors or family members who may have a vested interest. In a sense, the Entrepreneur is the Heat required for the business. Without the visionary a business cannot begin or grow. Although a necessary element, the Entrepreneur is not sufficient for a successful business.

Producer

Without someone producing the product or service the business will die. The product/service is the Fuel of the business. Producers are the doers and come in a wide range of talents and skills from an unskilled laborer to a highly skilled craftsperson. They are the baristas, servers, artisans, butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers. Producers are a necessary element, but they need direction from someone.

Manager

The Manager provides the Oxygen for the business, in a sense by allowing it to breath. The manager ensures that the right producers are hired and are trained, executes the vision of the entrepreneur, takes care of the administrative duties such as paying sales tax, making sure employees are paid and so on. The Manager is the final element required for a successful enterprise.

The Smaller your Business the more hats you wear

My wife and I ran a successful custom stained glass business out of our home a few years ago. It began when Kathy took a stained glass class, discovering she enjoyed the craft, and realized she was very good at it. When I casually talked about her hobby to my co-workers there was great interest in having

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her do some work for them.

Early on in this venture I became the accidental Entrepreneur and Kathy the Artisan producer. As the demand grew for her work Kathy took on more of the Entrepreneurial role as she developed new ideas and markets, and I took on the role as the Manager developing processes, taking care of the taxes, and so forth. I also did delivery and installation; so I became a Producer as well.

Our business never really grew beyond the point where we couldn't handle it ourselves. Yet as the Manager I was always thinking about how we would expand our capacity, and as Entrepreneur, Kathy was always thinking about new markets and opportunities.

How Is Your Business Triangle?

Look at your business today and ask yourself who is the Entrepreneur, who is the Manager and who are the Producers. If the answer is not clear you may need to make some adjustments. Remember that someone must perform each of these roles for your business to prosper.

- Performance Management [3]
- Product Realization [4]
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