

This is the first in a series of five articles.

The Rule of Seven for Building Your Business and Life

Did you know...33,000,000 home based businesses exist within the United States? Over 80% of these businesses will fail within the first five years. What is required for a small business to succeed? What is required for you to succeed in your life? Our experience teaches us that The Rule of Seven can increase your chances of success. Whether you are a business person or an employee, these simple rules can help you establish yourself in the marketplace or workplace.

What is the Rule of Seven? Seven is an acronym that is outlined below:

- S – Strategic Service
- E – Energy
- V – visibility
- E – Experience
- N - Negotiation

These concepts provide a blueprint for building a loyal customer base (external and internal customers), therefore, a sustainable business and/or work life. Let's start at the N of the word SEVEN and work our way back up to the S.

Negotiation is about establishing agreements with your customers and co-workers. It involves knowing what you want and asking for it "up front" in the relationship. There are two characteristics that get you in the door: 1. your customer must perceive that you can add value toward helping them solve their problems and 2. your customer must like you. Once the relationship has moved or is moving from prospect to customer, it's important to negotiate an agreement that is in your customer's best interest. Two broad areas of negotiation are the scope of the task and the nature of the relationship. The Rule of Seven focuses on negotiation of at least three critical factors: 1. a long-term relationship, 2. referrals, and 3. positive visibility. Be sure to add value first and often, before beginning any negotiation.

Why would you want to ask for a long-term relationship? Well one reason is that it adds stability to your business. It takes more time and money to have to go out and constantly get new customers because you've stopped servicing your previous customers. Ask for a long-term relationship. Find out what would need to happen to ensure a long-term relationship. Then deliver. The more you help them, the happier both of you will be.

Secondly, why would you ask for referrals? Did you know that 82% of business comes from referrals? Word of mouth has always been the best advertisement and directly leads to more revenue. What must you do in order to get referrals? A-S-K. You've got to ask. If people appreciate the value you add to them, then they'll be glad to give you a referral. Everyone knows someone else. How likely is it that your customer has a friend or colleague that sees things as they do? There's an old saying: Birds of a feather flock together. Take care of your "bird" (customer) and ask for others whom they "flock" with.

Thirdly, ask for positive visibility. No matter how great your service or product is, it does no good if no one knows about you. By negotiating for visibility, then your customer can and will put you in touch with decision makers. The first priority to

getting visibility is making your customer look good. When you make your customer look smart because of the tremendous value you add to them and their business, then they will naturally want to spread the word.

Some of the ways customers can give you visibility if you ask for it are: speaking at their events; writing articles for their newsletters or ones they read; invitations to company sponsored events (Christmas parties, fundraisers, etc). If you've added value and they like you, how would they introduce you? They might say something like: "This is 'so ad so' who helped us accomplish 'such and such'." Automatically, you're positioned in a positive way.

So the **N** in the Rule of Seven is negotiation. Negotiation is asking for agreement on how you will work together (relationship) and what will be done (task). Negotiation at the beginning of the relationship by asking for a long-term relationship, referrals, and positive visibility plants the seeds for sustained business. Delivering on your promises and service to exceed their expectations fertilizes the seed to ensure the growth of your business through your negotiated agreements. The next article will focus on **E**xperience.

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