



Dougal Cameron
President
Cameron Management
Corporate Real Estate

professional

What are top 3 principles for success in your industry?

I'm in the real estate business. I own, manage and lease office buildings. I'd worked for a couple big developers and got some very wonderful experience from them. The biggest thing that I learned is that you do what you know. I know office buildings. A lot of people think of real estate as sort of a black box. I could easily lose my shirt in retail or in industrial or in land development. People do what they know and they do it well. I had worked for Gerald Hines and Gerald Hines lost his shirt in industrial because that just wasn't his business. I'd worked for Trammel Crowe and Trammel Crowe lost his shirt in office because that wasn't his business. Stick to what you do well. Office buildings are what I know about and that's what I do. We have a very specific strategy about the type of office building and we want them to be office buildings that need very aggressive management and significant management intensity. Second thing would be that specifically in my industry in office buildings, you need to link the three main parts of it together: ownership, management and leasing. A lot of companies believe that you own a building, you hire somebody to manage it, and you hire somebody to lease. I don't think that works, especially in the niche I'm trying to work in, smaller suburban office buildings, what might be considered Class B. Those three things are intricately linked together and I want to make sure that the person who is making management decisions also has their ownership hat on and are worrying about cash flow and are worrying about customers and that sort of thing. People making leasing decisions are worrying if they have to deal with a leasing issue that they gave away three years from now. Finally, people have a tendency to think, for instance, in real estate, that you're talking about hard assets and so it's not a people business. But really every business is a people business. I've got customers who are tenants, I've got employees. If you don't figure out a way to develop long-term relationships with employees and customers, then you're going to have a problem in this business, just like any other business. It's no different and I think that is a problem. There are many people who invest in real estate who somehow think it's just a big box and you don't have to worry about the normal management decisions that people have to deal with in every business.

What character qualities do you look for when hiring?

I would put on the top of the list: honesty. I say that fairly regularly to my employees. You can make a lot of mistakes, you can not be fit for particular kinds of areas, you can show up late, there are all kinds of things you can do, but if you're dishonest, if you're caught in a compromising situation, it just colors your whole career. It makes it hard for me, for instance, to trust somebody in the future. And so known as a person who is honest ... not only me, but all my employees and everybody that deals with them ... I think that's really important. Loyalty is one that I would say is really important. I don't mean that somebody works for me and they never think of working for somebody else, but that I know that they have a desire to do right by me and that's true of my partners. My partners need to know that I'm not busy trying to think of how I can take money away from them, but I'm loyal to them. I'm thinking of ways that I can make sure our incentives are the same, going the same direction. So I'd say honesty and loyalty are two really vital character traits.

personal

How do you define success? How has your definition evolved?

I do not define success by making a lot of money or having a big company. Those are attributes of success. They've got to be a part of a business person's perspective. But I know lots of people who are very wealthy, who have a great business success, and don't have a marriage or don't have a family. And if you don't have those things, then you're not a success. I certainly wouldn't define that person as a success. Personally, beyond making sure that I have my priorities straight ... God first, my wife second, my children third and then work somewhere after that ... I want to have a very balanced life. I don't want to have work be priority number four and I've got four priorities in my life and that's all there is. Frankly, I want to have a well-rounded, balanced life. When I look around and see someone who has that, I think of them as a successful person. And generally, I find that they act like a successful person when they lead a balanced, content life.

What does balance mean to you? How important is balance to success?

There are seasons in a person's business career, as like a farmer, when you're brining in the crop or you're plowing the fields. There may be a week or two or even a month or two where you're working extremely long hours. But it's got to be for a short period of time. I don't know how many people I talk to who think they can do that when their kids are young or they can work for two or three or four years and then they're going to slow down. It almost never happens. You work for two or three or four years and you get used to working hard, that's the way you always work because you don't have a life outside of it. The way I've done it, at least, is to severely limit the kinds of things that I'm willing to do. There have been times in my business career where I think from an outward stand point, or a short-term stand point that's hurt me, but long-term, as a I look back on it, it's actually all been to my benefit. It's certainly been to my family's benefit. I don't think you get pay back on something like that and I think God can also ... based on your marriage and the needs of your kids ... can certainly say that. Some people can work 60 hours a week and other people need to figure out a way that they're only working 30 hours a week. But I think when you start talking about 80 and 100 hours a week on any kind of regular basis, it's not something that ... if you're married and you have children ... that God's called you to. And so I think that's a vital issue and I look for that in my employees. If I see them getting out of line on that, I try to say, "We've got to figure out some way to reorient this." I don't want to be the cause of them not meeting their priorities that are important to me.

How do you prioritize your time/values? What are your priorities?

The first thing that's important about priorities is to know what your main priorities are. If it is not clear to you that God's first, your wife's second and your children are third, then it's real easy to get all kinds of other things mixed up. That's the first thing that's got to go through the grid and for me. For instance, I don't accept night kinds of things. The evening is an important time for me because if I start doing that, then I don't have the time that I need with my wife and my children. Then you come and take a step down. How do you prioritize in the business world? The thing you've got to figure out, again, is what are you after? If you have a goal of being really, really big, that's going to push certain priorities your way. If you have a goal, like I do, of having a desirable place to work for me and my employees, then it changes the priorities. It changes what you're willing to take on. You have to get clear what you're life goals are and then your priorities will flow out of that. And not be terribly hard after that, it certainly will come along. I've got some buildings and I'm trying to figure out how I'm going to get it all done, but the main priorities and the main ways that we spend our time and our money are pretty clear cut.

How do you deal with stress? How did you used to deal with stress?

How do I deal with stress? I don't consider stress necessarily a bad thing. Stress is a way of God communicating to you what things are important, where you are in your priorities and principles and that sort of thing. I always come back to the verse in Scripture that says, "Do not be anxious about anything." It's a command. We're not supposed to be anxious about anything. Stress and anxiety are usually indications that you've got something that you've got to deal with. I take it that's just God saying, "Don't be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, let your request be made known to God." I spend a lot of time praying. I find sometimes, without going for two to three weeks or two to three months when I don't have a lot of stress, sometimes my quiet time gets sort of on low and that maybe sometimes God's bringing that stress to me to remind me of who's in charge



and that I need to spend time with Him. So spending time with God and in the Word and in prayer is absolutely essential for a believer to deal with stress. I know in my life it works over and over and over again. Now, I won't say that you don't get into stress and you're in stress for weeks and maybe even months, but if you're spending time with the Lord, then I guarantee that stress is either less or appropriate as opposed to, if you're not spending time with the Lord, it's going to be unbearable. In fact, you have the stress of probably not doing that on top of business stress.

s p i r i t u a l

Can you follow Christ and still have a successful career, family and such?

Yes. The main question is ... what has Christ called you to? If he's called you to a business career, then he's called you to do it very, very well. My experience is that if you take care of your priorities in life, you cannot make your job your God and you be a success. I know many believers who have not compromised their principles, and are successful. I wouldn't say that God doesn't call some believers to a certain amount of failure. I've experienced that in my career. If you took a snap shot of me in certain years, you'd say, "He doesn't seem to be in a business that he's doing very well at", but that's the nature of business, taking risks and making long term judgments. The most important lessons I've learned, I've learned when I've had great difficulties in business. You've got to be careful. Success, like I said before, is a word that you can't define by how much money you make or how big your business gets. On the other hand, if a person goes for a long period of time in a business and they're not making any money and they're not growing, it may be God's way of saying, "This isn't the place that I've called you to."