

## **It's Not Just A Job**

by **Steven D Huff**

Andy Grove, CEO of Intel, made a commencement address to the Haas School of Business back in 1994. In the speech he offered this advice, "Accept that no matter where you go to work, you are not an employee -- you are a business with one employee -- you. Nobody owes you a career; you own it. As a sole proprietor, you must compete with millions of individuals everyday of your career. You must enhance your value everyday, hone your competitive advantage, learn, adapt, move jobs and industries. You must also retrench so you can advance and learn new skills so that you do not become a statistic. And remember: This process starts on Monday."

There seems to be a great difference between people in today's workforce. A difference of perspective exists between those who view their work as "just a job" and those who see themselves as entrepreneurs. Traditionally, we think of entrepreneurs as those who start companies. Yet a growing segment of workers have adopted an entrepreneurial mindset while remaining employed by someone else. These people approach their work as if they were self-employed and the company is their sole client. This perspective may be the leading factor for achieving professional success in the years to come.

Here are several ideas for building your "Business of One" while on the job:

- **Add Value To Your "Employer"** -- Any first-year business student knows that you won't attract and retain clients without providing value. Needs must be met, solutions provided, improvements made, and more. This, of course, is the foundation for keeping customers happy. If you view your "employer" as your biggest (and only) client, you'll learn to take on the "provide value" mindset.
- **Stick To Your Strengths** -- As you come to understand your employer's needs, learn to match those needs with your own realistic abilities. You won't serve anyone's interests when you attempt to work outside of your area of competency. Always try to leverage who you are, including your talents, skills, experience, and areas of interest.
- **Work From A Plan** -- Successful businesses plan strategically and make some effort to share those plans with the workforce. Yet employees often show up day after day and simply address the issues, problems and opportunities in front of them. The "business of one" mindset requires that we become strategic in our work for the company and with our own career development.
- **Know When To Say "NO"** -- When Joe Frazier was heavyweight champion of the world, a reporter asked, "Why do you box?" Frazier's response was simple, "Because I'm a boxer." As a "business of one" you'll have to decide who you are and what you really want to do. Once your purpose is clear, you'll know when to say yes, and more importantly, when to say no.
- **Define Success In Your Own Terms** -- When you view your employer as your biggest and only client, you will feel tremendous pressure to accomplish everything they set before you. And this is a part of adding value. At the same time, remember, you are your own "business." You must decide for yourself where you want to go professionally. Ultimately, success has to be on your terms.