Frustrations of a Business Owner

I love being a SCORE mentor! I have the opportunity to see some of the newest, neatest business opportunities that one could every think of. I also get to visit with current business owners and in many settings they exchange ideas and solve common problems and issues. Most of the time, being a small business owner is one of the greatest fulfilling experiences in the world. But they all share some common “bad hair day stories”. At one of these sessions not long ago, I asked them to “let it all out”. Tell me the things that frustrate you and maybe I can pass some of them along in one of my columns and to those who are wanting to start a new business in hopes that they can be better prepared to deal with some of the frustrations of being a business owner. WOW! They opened up and I could hardly keep up writing. In jest, I told them that the paper usually limits me to a certain length of the column.

Here are the some of the frustrations of the business owners. I won’t be able to comment on all of them, but this is a sample and I think it is good to get into the thoughts of a business owner to learn what they deal with in managing and operating their business day in and day out.

• I didn’t know how hard it would be to keep up with the “business” side and do all the bills and paper work. Most people go into a business because the like to do the trade or art or service that they offer. But, they underestimate the time and the importance of the business details. I say be quick to find someone who can help you and don’t let it pile up. Free yourself to do what you like and do best.

• Clients/customers that don’t respond to my e-mails or phone calls even after I have worked with them. My response is that these are people who have not been convinced that they need what you were talking to them about. For some reason either time isn’t right or it isn’t a good fit for them. Give them one last polite contact telling them that you would be glad to help them when they are ready, the ball is in their court.

• Customers that don’t tell you they don’t pay their bill Do you have a clear policy for accounts receivable? Could you do business on a “cash only” basis? Be certain to communicate with these people, let them know what your policy is and see if circumstances have changed since your purchase. Maybe you can will work something out. Lack of communication only leads to frustration and expensive conversations with lawyers.

• Customers say they will buy my product “next week” but then never do. Sometimes a business owner would like to just hear a “no thanks” if a client really doesn’t want to buy something. I think that this may be a “Minnesota nice” thing of not wanting to hurt the owner’s feelings.

• Employees that quit their job simply by not showing up one day. This was a very common experience that I heard. It is sad that some employees don’t have the common courtesy to give notice. About all I can suggest is that business owners make it very clear what your policy is and try to work at strategies to retain good employees. Many times it is best that an employee that is dissatisfied leaves sooner than later.
Dean L. Swanson
Southeast Minnesota SCORE
c/o Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce
220 South Broadway, Suite 100
Rochester, MN 55904
*Dean is a volunteer SCORE Mentor.