

# CHAPTER 1

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## CONFESSIONS OF A BUSINESS COACH...

*The day after tomorrow is the third day of the rest of your life.*

~ George Carlin

I was at dinner with a group of business owners and we were discussing the pending publication of this book. One of the owners said he was very interested in my book because, “I don’t read business books very often, but when I do, I just assume they must be right...” Truer words have never been spoken. So many people read a business book and just assume it must be right because it is in print. There is a lot of garbage out there disguised as business advice. We are led to believe that if we just follow a simple set of step-by-step instructions, anybody can build a successful business. If that were the case, why aren’t all businesses successful? And using that logic, doesn’t it make sense that anybody with a step-by-step business book would be a successful business coach or consultant? After all, they have an instruction book.

There are a lot of very good business coaches/consultants, both in and out of franchise organizations. But unfortunately, they are in the minority. The dirty little secret in the business coaching/consulting world is that most business coaches/consultants are struggling to make a living. The lucky ones have a spouse who is bringing in some income. How can that be if they have the instruction manual for success? How do you coach another business to success if you can’t make money in your own business? You can’t.

As I mentioned, my wife and I owned a business coaching franchise for four years so let me just get this out of the way: business coaching works, sometimes. There is a very important caveat – you have to find the right coach for you and your business. If not, it is a waste of time and money. In my first year, I was the North American Rookie of the Year and the Georgia Coach of the Year for the franchise. I was a successful coach in the system, but was I the most successful coach? Nope. Could I have been? Probably. But frankly I just did not want to work the hours those coaches did. I also stopped “drinking the Kool-Aid.”

For the majority of my clients, my coaching was very successful. For others it did not work. Why some and not others? Why not all? It would be easy to tell you the reasons my clients were successful. It’s much harder to look at why the coaching did not work. But that is when we learn – when we fail. So when I lose a client, I try and take an honest look at what happened. I found that there are many reasons for the coaching process to fail and there is plenty of blame to spread around. Some examples: My personality did not fit with my client; I failed to deliver to the client’s expectations; the client waited too long to ask for help and could (or would) not get out of the ditch; or the client frankly should not have been in business in the first place. But the number-one reason I have found for failure is the inability for business owners to get out of their own way. This fatal leadership flaw has crashed many a business.

As a coach you sometimes have to be tough with your clients to help them break through whatever obstacles are in their way. If the coach is too worried about losing a client because of their own personal cash-flow situation, the coach will be hesitant to rock the boat. I know; I have been there.

I know of another coaching company that uses employees to do the coaching. Does an employee really know what it is like to be a business owner? No. And I don’t care how much training they have had, or what handbook they follow, employees and owners live in two different worlds.

Ultimately, it boils down to the experiences and knowledge of the coach and how applicable they are to the client’s circumstances. Some coaches are more “life” coaches than “business” coaches. Which

is fine if that is what you signed up for. Their sessions tend to be more like therapy sessions than about business practices. But the reality is that most businesses who hire a coach don't have time for therapy sessions. They need results and they need them now. Often, the "business" part of this type of coaching is: "Here, read this book; everybody is reading it... Now let's do an exercise where we think positive thoughts and imagine our sales increasing." Like I said, that is fine if that is what you signed up for, but just don't expect your sales to increase.

Unfortunately, too many coaches use the latest hyped book as a base for their coaching sessions because they do not have a business foundation upon which to help business owners. Bottom line: make sure you find the right coach for you and your business. If you do, that person really can help you turn your business around or take it to the next level. Choose the wrong one and no matter how much you sit around and imagine unicorns and rainbows, your business is not going to change.