



AWARENESS AND MASTERY – TWO ESSENTIAL KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL SMALL BUSINESS

At the heart of it, mastery is practice. Mastery is staying on the path."

~ George Leonard

US pioneer in human potential

We often hear managers complaining that their employees aren't productive, don't listen and just can't consistently get the job done. As a youth sports coach, I hear coaches with similar complaints—the kids don't listen, don't know where to go and don't try very hard. I can't relate. The boys on my team are usually focused, do what I ask of them, and work hard. As a business owner, my employees are focused, do what I ask of them and work hard. What am I doing that is different from the rest? And what can this teach you about running a successful small business?

As a coach, I make my boys' jobs very simple. I ask only two things of them. I ask them to master one shot and I ask them to be aware of what is going on around them. Of course we work on defensive and offensive strategy, but both of those revolve around the two keys that I gave them for success—awareness and mastery.

I teach awareness by constantly asking them to be aware of where the ball is and at the same time to be aware of their teammates are and where their opponents are. I teach them how to see the ball and their opponent when he doesn't have the ball. Sounds simple, but for ten year olds this is work.

I teach mastery by assigning homework to each boy. The second week of practice, they have to show me a spot on the court from which they can make a shot every time. I don't care if it is from just two feet under the basket. I want them to know they can make it every single time. As the season progresses, they may gradually move their spot further and further out, but I still ask that they be able to make their shot every time unguarded in practice.

These two simple concepts have a tremendous effect on the boys during their games. They have incredible confidence in their ability to make shots because they "know" that they will always make it. I don't need to yell at them like other coaches about where they should be on the court because they have developed awareness of what they are doing and seeing. Now let's see how you can use this in your successful small business.

As a business owner, I put these two key principles to work in training my employees. From the first day on the job, I work with them to be aware of what tasks are needed, what I expect of them, how I want customers treated, etc. And I ask them to master tasks and customer scripts. Once they are mastered, I open it up for them to adlib just like with my players. When correction is needed, it is usually in one of these two areas. They are either unaware of what is needed or they haven't mastered the task at hand.

Not only does following these two concepts make it easy for me to get results with my players and employees, it also brings incredible results. My first team lost only one game all season and my employees rarely lose a sale. My businesses and products win awards earned by my employees. And, as a bonus, everyone enjoys themselves with this simple structure. I knew I was doing it right when the father of one of my boys told me that his boy enjoyed practice so much that he chose to come to practice instead of going to see our professional basketball team play one night. And I know it works with my employees because they show up on time happy, focused and ready to work. Remember, awareness and mastery are two essential keys to a successful small business.

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