

What An Airline Stewardess Can Teach You About Business Success

If you've been on a plane lately, you've probably heard the airline stewardess give you the little safety spiel. How you buckle your seatbelt. What to do in case of a water landing. And what happens if those little oxygen masks drop down.

What you're supposed to do is put your mask on first then put the masks on your children. In that order. You, then your kids.

Why? Because if you pass out while trying to help your kids, you'll help no one, least of all yourself and your kids.

Which is the point of my article today. Are you putting your clients' needs above your own?

Now good customer care does require us to go above and beyond the call of duty. And sometimes we do have to work late or on weekends to help a good client or customer out. That's not what this is about. What this is about is if you're consistently doing everything for your clients and nothing for yourself, you ultimately may not be helping your clients.

Let me give you some examples --

1. You're never not available. Clients or prospects can call you anytime of the day or night and you'll answer.
2. You don't take a vacation (a real vacation) - again because you want your clients to be able to get in touch with whenever they want.
3. You don't spend anytime growing your business -- the only time you do any sort of marketing is when your business is down. Otherwise you put your client work first. (Note -- this can extend to other business tasks as well, such as getting your invoices out or doing your filing.)

This last one probably doesn't seem so bad. "But I'm working on my clients' projects, I can't possibly spend time on my business when they're paying me to work on stuff for them." While on one hand that sounds good, it really isn't.

Think about it. If your business is a mess because you never spend anytime on it -- you're late collecting on your invoices because you don't send out billing, you're stressed about cash flow and where your next sale is coming from, etc. how can you possibly be taking care of your clients or customers at the highest level possible? Only when you have your own house in order can you fully take care of your clients' needs. (In other words, you have your oxygen mask on instead of being on the brink of passing out.)

And it's the same with the first two as well. You need to take care of yourself first, and the only way to take care of yourself is to give yourself a breather every now and then. You need some time off to take care of you – otherwise, what good will you be to anyone? Do you think your clients really want to be working with an exhausted, stressed out version of yourself, or do they want to work with someone who is excited and passionate about what they're doing, even if it means they can't reach them 24/7, and have to give them some unplugged time every now and again?

If this is you, don't feel bad. I made all these mistakes myself when I was first starting out in the accounting world. But over the last 20 or so years I realized the better I took care of myself and my business, the better I took care of my clients. That sounds counterintuitive but it's true. Because I take time off, I'm healthier and have more energy. Because I treat my business like I would my one of my clients, I feel like I'm in sync with the business principles I teach clients, plus I can share with my clients what is working for real right now. I can advise you on real-world tactics because I'm right there in the trenches with you.

I invite all of you to take a look at your relationship with your clients. Is there something you're doing for them you're not doing for yourself? Do you think it may be time to change that?