Why You Should Fire Yourself

Seriously, it may just make you a better business owner.

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“You’re fired.”

Every small business owner or entrepreneur’s career has either uttered or been on the receiving end of these words. But have you ever said them to yourself? If the answer is “no,” you’ve gotten far too comfortable. I mean it. It’s time for a shake-up.

Lift your butt from that cush chair, walk yourself over to the nearest mirror and say it along with me: “You’re fired.” Feel free to punctuate that as a resounding exclamation. And for even greater impact, do it in the infamous voice of a world leader who probably should have stuck to reality TV. Cringing yet?

Now take a moment to consider your next steps in this virtual self-caning exercise. With the proverbial axe dropped, how would you move forward, reinvigorate your approach or find your next success and do it better? What would the process look like and what would you do differently?

In this visualization, you get to write your own script, so choose an epic journey with a glorious ending. Be sure to include plenty of obstacles and some moments of real fear along the way. After all, what ending would truly be glorious without overcoming challenges to get there? (Hello, Hollywood calling!) These are the lessons that shape us, and we can either surrender to them and hit roadblocks or learn from them

and grow as leaders.

So, take it all in, write it down, commit it to memory … the obstacles, fears, highs and lows and – yes – the success. You just fired yourself (albeit virtually) and came out ahead. Now what are you going to do with it?

As a business owner who has fired myself more than once, I call it fixing what's not yet broken. You can't successfully future-proof when you're already backed in a corner, which is the mistake far too many entrepreneurs make after they've gotten too comfortable.

Google co-founder Larry Page once said, "Lots of companies don't succeed over time. What do they fundamentally do wrong? They usually miss the future." Try applying that same proactive approach to your self-firing to the times you may not think you actually need it. If these steps seem simple, it's because they are, but they're also quite helpful:

Embrace discomfort

A caning doesn't feel good, even when it's virtual. Remember the fire it lit beneath you and make discomfort your rallying call. As entrepreneurs and business owners, we're traveling a road potholed with challenges. Try to see it differently and turn obstacles into opportunities. Step out of your comfort zone and learn to love the feeling.

Banish complacency

Whether you're between jobs or happily immersed in your latest project, complacency is a killer, the kind that will land you in Mediocreville, at best, and more likely in a slow downward spiral. Get active, shake things up, make it happen for yourself. Don't be afraid to break the routine. The change may do wonders.

Constantly innovate

In the few minutes it’s taken to read this article, new technologies have already emerged that will impact way we communicate, find and do business. Seriously. To stay competitive means keeping up with innovation. Challenge yourself to get ahead of the curve, replacing outdated processes with new efficiencies. Look for inspiration from different industries.

Be a lifelong student

It’s easy enough to say, “Always be learning,” but this also means you must be humble enough to learn in the first place. A firing (even when you do it to yourself) is a lesson in instant humility, a reflection on what worked, what didn’t and where you need to change or grow. Don’t let ego get in the way. Ask for help, learn to glean the best advice and keep doing it for the rest of your career.

Have a sense of humor

Let’s face it: Business is often a difficult, stress-filled experience that can give you heartburn, if not worse. So laugh, get silly and blow off steam along the way. You’ll not only help your health but will also fuel your creativity, as humor is often the breeding ground for crazy-BIG ideas … the kind that change the world.

In the end, a virtual self-firing session is really about staying one step ahead, about using vision and action to not only prevent the issues that drag us down, but actually keep us innovative and thriving. To put it most concisely, would you rather give your Ferrari a precision tune-up now or wait until the engine blows out? Your choice.

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