

# We're All In The Same Business Together

by Richard William Favaloro, J.D.

In the July *St. Louis Small Business Journal Monthly* Commentary, Jack Hoffmann asked us to define our business. He provided good reasons for why we should do it and good ways for us to do it. The better we define our business, the better we distinguish ourselves from other businesses, including our competitors. That's good for our business. But in defining ourselves, we can also *connect* our business with other businesses, even our competitors. That's good for our business, too. We can connect in good ways if we can see how we're all in the same business together.

On a fundamental level, we *are* all in the same business together. Of course, we define our different *industries* in different words: printing; marketing; consulting. Within a given industry, we define our different *businesses* in different words: Abe's Perfect Printing; Barb's Fliers, Booklets, and More; Carla's Words To Go. In various contexts, we even define our *own* business in different words: Abe's provides excellent service; Abe's is a successful company; The Abester will wow your target customers! But whatever words we use, on a fundamental level, *our business is simply to meet our goals*.

We use different words for "goals": objectives, missions, visions, purposes, values, targets, executive mandated desired strategic performance results (yikes!). We use different words for "our" goals: this company's, the firm's, our business', the corporation's; my organization's, this publication's. We use different words for "meet" our goals: accomplish, attain, complete, secure, do, finish, achieve. We use different words to put it all together: realize our company vision, live our firm's mission, reach our department objective, hit the task force target, accomplish our organizational vision. But whatever words we use, on a fundamental level, our business is simply to *meet our goals*.

On that level, we all do business subject to a basic axiom, or fundamental truth, about *how* we meet our goals: "When we use good rules, we meet our goals. When we don't use good rules, we miss our goals." *Rules* are instructions that describe what we do. For example, "send fliers". *Good* rules are rules that meet our goals. For example, when you want to send five fliers, and you sent three fliers, "send two more fliers". Rules and goals work like directions and driving. When we use good ones, we get where we want to go; when we don't, we get lost. We can state the goals axiom in different ways, too: when we don't meet our goals, we don't use good rules; when we met our goals, we used good rules. But however we say it, on a more specific level, our business is simply to *use good rules*.

We use different words for "rules": policies, procedures, guidelines, ways, steps, hints, instructions, routines, standards, duties, practices, processes, laws, directions, requirements, do's and don'ts. We use different words for "good" rules: effective, professional, correct, smart, efficient, wise, responsible, productive, time-tested, proven, practical, useful, successful. We even use different words for "use" good rules: follow, achieve, abide, be true to, comply with, respect, obey, play by, perform. We use different words to put it all together: comply with the guidelines, perform our firm standards, do your duties, follow the company plans, get with the program *puh-lease!* But whatever words we use, on a more specific level, our business is simply to *use good rules*.

When we see ourselves in the same business - to use good rules to meet our goals - we will find and use benefits of heretofore unimaginable delight and reward. Really!

First, we can transform boring yawns into exhilarating inspirations. Let's say you've got a company sales quota to attain. But you find yourself at a luncheon listening to a speaker blab on about steps to improve employee evaluations. Now as a sophisticated professional, you know what to do. Sneak out the service entrance door, right? Not so fast. That speech may be the solution you need - if you listen on a fundamental level. Look at your attaining your quota, and others having good evaluations, as "goals". Then look at your possible ways to go after your quota, and their steps to improve evaluations, as "rules". Now you're both on the same page: how rules meet goals. Just like that, you're applying someone else's employee evaluation rules to attain your sales quota goals. Dude, you're a genius!

Second, we can transform "Aha!" moments from our personal world to "Eureka!" breakthroughs in our professional world. Let's say you've got to run next week's big company planning meeting. But tonight, you're reading an article about tips for spring cleaning your garage. Now think on the fundamental level. Look at having an organized garage, and leading a great meeting, as "goals". Then look at tips for spring cleaning, and agenda items for your meeting, as "rules". Hey, you're using your garage mess to deliver spiffy group strategic planning. When the boss praisefully asks how you aced that meeting, you just state the simple facts: "I ditched the mildewed boxes, hook-mounted the gardening tools, and man, I sent those spiders packing."

Third, when we *miss* our goals, we can skip the arguing and disagreeing. That's because for every problem, on a fundamental level, we can agree, word-for-word, on the key pieces of the puzzle. On the nature of the problem: "we missed our goals". On its cause: "we didn't use good rules". On its solution: "meet our goals". On how to do it: "use good rules". When we *meet* our goals, we all know why: we used good rules. We know how to do it again: use good rules. We can whip out our harmonica, play the same song, and make more beautiful music.

We're all in the same business together. Sure, we use different words to describe our various businesses. But fundamentally, our business is simply to "meet our goals". More specifically, our business is simply to "use good rules to meet our goals". So use good rules to meet your goals. For example, try this rule: Be a genius, make beautiful music, and man, send those spiders packing!

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