

The Archer

By David B. Burns

“In archery we have something of the superior man. When the archer misses the center of the target, he turns around and seeks for the cause of his failure in himself.”

Chinese proverb

This ancient proverb succinctly sums up the attitude needed for entrepreneurial success. In your business, or in life, if you have the archer’s attitude, you will spend little time blaming others for problems and challenges. When you meet a bump in the road, you may at first, like most people, ask who or what is to blame. But you will quickly move on to the next question: “What am I going to do about it?”

For example, if you are having trouble attracting new customers, you can complain that the problem is your town, the economy, or the season of the year. These aren’t really problems, they are simply facts. What you do with these facts is the important thing.

Do you talk about your “but?” Do you say, “I’d be doing a lot better, but . . .,” and then make up an excuse to shift the blame elsewhere? How does your “but” impact your business?

One summer several years ago, there was major construction on a bridge leading into my downtown area. Traffic was limited to one lane. Long lines and delays were common and shoppers didn’t like fighting the congestion or taking the detour.

The downtown merchants dealt with the problem in one of two ways. One group chose to do nothing but complain about the construction. They constantly talked about their butts. The other group came up with a variety of “bridge-out” incentives to draw shoppers to their stores, despite the inconvenience. Which group do you think had the smallest butts and the happiest summer?

Want more customers? Take the initiative to learn new marketing techniques. Read books and study what successful entrepreneurs are doing. Make the most of the feedback (both good and bad) you get from your existing customers. Pay especially close attention to any information you get from unhappy customers. Be thankful for that gift. It’s worth remembering that they could have just walked away silently, never to return.

Then follow up. Even the best ideas won’t help if you don’t apply them. Make a plan to implement the ideas and stick to it. If the first idea doesn’t work, try something different. Keep on shooting arrows at the target until you learn to hit the bull’s eye.

Your entrepreneurial attitude (and your profit) will grow as your willingness to take responsibility for your own results grows. So arm yourself with the entrepreneurial attitude and start where you are right now. No whining. Begin with the natural gifts you possess and look actively for ways to expand your knowledge, improve your business, and grow your profits. Then, like the archer, the center of the target will be yours.

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David travels the country working as a business trainer, speaker, and consultant to organizations ranging in size from micro-businesses to Fortune 500 firms. He brings diverse training and knowledge to every presentation, including a degree in Education, advanced degrees in multiple martial arts, and the practical hands-on experience of running his own businesses since 1980. With his trademark optimism and sense of humor, he shares his experience in terms everyone can relate to, put into practice, and benefit from immediately.

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