



Goltz by Jay Goltz On Business

Get To the Next Level Without Falling Down the Stairs

There is a business phrase that I keep hearing; people want “to get to the next level.” What does that mean? It’s different than, “I would like to keep growing my business.” It seems that getting to the next level means that you are “stuck” on the level you are on now. There is some barrier, obstacle, or leap that is necessary to get their company to a bigger size.

The fact that a person uses this phrase suggests that he acknowledges that there needs to be some changes made to obtain this lofty goal. One of the things that has changed over the years is that people now have greater ambitions, and higher expectations; they’ve been bombarded with success stories of business in America.

The generation before mine was told that they had to become professionals if they wanted to be successful. When I graduated college and said I was going into the picture frame business, people looked at me like I was crazy. The con-

ventional wisdom was that you were supposed to go to law school.

The term “entrepreneur” was seldom used, and if it was, it was almost said with disdain, like, “What an operator.” That quickly changed in the 80’s, and now being an entrepreneur is quite the rage. Which leaves us with the nagging question, “Why are there so many people trying to get to the next level?” The operative word here is “trying.”

The answer is simple, but it’s not always easy. It goes against many of our personality traits. It requires getting out of your comfort zone and doing things that do not come naturally. After talking to and listening to numerous framers over the

last year, I have a new perspective.

Frankly, in all these years I never had the occasion to talk to many other framers. I was just growing my business, trying to figure things out. Since I’ve been talking to people about FramersSelect, I’ve had the opportunity to find

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out where people are at, what their challenges are, and what they want to be. In a very unscientific analysis, I'll give you the top three things that are holding people back from "getting to the next level."

Delegation: You cannot strategize, plan, or execute any kind of business expansion if you are spending all of your time framing pictures. You probably know what's coming, and you're right. You

need to delegate. Those people who believe that if you want to be sure that something is done right, you have to do it yourself—you're right. The people who say that might be getting it done right, but they aren't getting much done. One person can only do so much. If you don't believe you can trust anyone else to do any part of your job—from selling to framing—you're going to be paralyzed.

In order to properly delegate, you have to believe that there are good people out there. It's not always easy to find them, but they are out there. You also have to accept responsibility to "unhire" people if you made a mistake—which we all do. You have to be committed to training the person and living through their learning curve. It is very easy at this point to slip into the "I'm just going to do it myself" mode, but you must resist the temptation. Perseverance will be rewarded. I have found little more satisfying in business than an employee that you hire, train, and watch mature and flourish. You feel good about yourself and the staff member.

Being Cheap: I am amazed at how many people say they want to grow their business but are unwilling to spend any money to do so. It's like saying you want to win the lottery but don't buy a ticket. It ain't gonna happen. You are not going to make more money by coming up with a better scrapboard system. Or cutting up cardboard boxes to use as backing. Or not replacing the torn carpeting in your store. You are going to make more money by embracing technology—by computerizing your store, buying a computerized mat cutter, or

buying a bottom joiner.

This gets down to simple math. Those cost savings and opportunities are going to be a much bigger number than the \$473.52 you save in matboard purchases

over the course of a year. (Maybe this category should be called "Taking Risks.") Now for those of you who say, "I would do those things but can't afford to," you need to borrow money. If you

don't have the money to invest in whatever it is you want to invest in, you borrow the money and pay it back with the savings. God bless America!

Staying In The Dark: To be successful in business, like most things, requires expertise. Expertise in framing is far more popular than expertise in business issues in this industry. But you also need to have some level of expertise in pricing, marketing, management, and sales training. Trying to get to the next level if you are deficient in one of these areas will be nearly impossible.

People do not make it in spite of themselves, they make it *because* of themselves. The trade shows in Las Vegas, Atlanta, and New York have many new opportunities to sharpen these business skills. You'll find answers to your questions, and answers to problems you weren't even aware you had.

Say What You Mean, Mean What You Say: The reality is that many people say they want to take their business to the next level, but they really don't. They like what they are doing and they like how they do it. While they would like to make more money, neither the pain of where they are at nor the need of being more successful is enough to drive them to make some changes.

While solving each of these problems is fairly simple, it isn't at all easy for many people. Here's the point. Instead of thinking "I want to take my business to the next level," start thinking "I want to take myself to the next level." The business will follow. So will a new car; a convertible. ■

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