



The Grass Is Always Greener

I was sitting down the other day reading my column fan mail (it doesn't take long, to date I've gotten three letters), and two things struck me. My initial response was, "What a nice thing to do. Someone took the time to sit down and write me a letter." I've been writing this column for over a year and a half, and have often wondered if there's anyone out there. It's encouraging to hear from people because I like to know what sort of impact I'm making—if any! It also reminds me that I should send more letters than I do.

The second thing that struck me was the content of one of the letters. In it, the writer states, "Staying focused is a discipline that you seem to have gotten down pat."

I'm not *that* focused. The reason that I've been able to write on all of these subjects is because I have had to struggle with these issues myself. As I'm talking to you, I'm also talking to myself. I remind myself of what I should be doing.

I've found that if insecurity was money, most people would be millionaires. Most people who go into business have no formal training and are trying to figure things out on their own. While they're doing this, it's easy to look around at all those "successful" businesses and think, "They seem to know what they're doing." When I started my business at age 22, I assumed that everyone in the picture frame industry know a lot more than I did. Some did. Some didn't.

As I've gotten out there and have talked to other business owners and joined business groups, I've found that

all businesses have problems in one way or the other, just to different degrees. The differences between the successful ones and the mediocre ones is that successful business owners don't accept their problems. They try to fix and improve, however long that takes.

I used to think that success was a function of how smart someone was and how hard they worked. Now I realize that there are other factors—like being stubborn, for instance. I'm very good at this—my wife and mother say I'm an expert. (I think I inherited it; my mother says it's from my father.) I think to succeed in business you have to have some level of stubbornness. Some might call it persistence. Some might call it "stick-to-it-ivness." Some might call it fool-heartedness.

Business is not easy. There are constant challenges. The difference between the successful and unsuccessful is getting back up on the horse after being thrown.

You made a bad hire; you fire them. You hire someone else; they don't work out. You do it again until you find the right person, or until you find out how to find the right person. The same holds true for doing the right advertising, estimating how long a job will take, or finding a supplier that will ship good product.

The only person who makes money whining is Rodney Dangerfield—and he's not a picture framer.

Go get 'em. You know more than you think.

P.S. Here's my address. I'm running out of material. 1915 N. Clybourn, Chicago, IL 60614. ■