

Rules of Engagement – Do Your Clients Know Yours? By Beth Schneider

Are you a big sports fan? I'm really not, but when my Grandpa waived his amazing Los Angeles Lakers Basketball season tickets in my face (they're 6th row, right behind actor, Andy Garcia) I jumped on it. There's something really fun about being at a live event, watching the action unfold with thousand of other fans around you. Spending time with my Grandparents has always been a high priority. I lost two of my four Grandparents last year so the game wasn't just about the amazing seats and the live game, it was about being able to spend more time with him.

In the middle of cheering Kobe on as he made yet another basket. It hit me how we as business owners can learn a few things from the sporting world. Here are 4 things I learned from hanging out at a Lakers game.

#1 Know the rules

No matter what sport you are talking about, the rules of the games are clearly defined and everyone - players, coaches, referees, fans - knows them. However, many small business owners don't have their own "rules". Rather than taking their client through a specific process, they make it up as they go along. What happens is the client inadvertently runs the show often making the whole experience overwhelming and stressful for everyone. Yes, I know every client is different. And yes, every client might get something a little different, but if you guide him or her through a specific process, life will get much easier. Think about the steps you want to take your client through ahead of time.

#2 Be open to challenging the current Process

At 7:45am on game morning, every phone in my house started ringing; waking me up out a dead sleep. The panicked messages went something like this, "Beth it's Gramps, turns out the game is not at 6:30pm tonight, it's at 12:30 this afternoon, so get up and come over here now."

Fifteen minutes later, we were talking about our new game plan and I had two choices. Go with his plan and run out the door immediately or challenge the process. What time do you want to be there? Do you want to eat lunch before we go? By looking at the situation and asking some questions about his desired outcome, I was able to re-work the process and set it up so that we could meet at his house at 11am.

The key here is that you have to be OPEN. It is easy to get caught in a routine, which then feels like the only way.

#3 Winging it is not allowed

Can you imagine if the players all went out on the court and said, "you throw it, no you throw it" or how about, "I'll just be somewhere out there on the court, look for me".

There is a strategic process. Every player has their role, which includes where they will be and what they will do with the ball when they get it. The team has plays that they follow – a system for getting around obstacles and getting the ball to the basket.

It is the same for your business. Laying out the plays and how everything works is the key to getting the ball to the basket, or in your case the money to the bank.

#4 They Implement their System

Players commit to the play instructions from the coach and follow it as it has been laid out. They implement the plan.

My most successful clients are those who take their new systems, their "instructions" if you will and implement right away. They commit to it and then do it. It doesn't mean there aren't course corrections along the way, but you have to put your system into action.

Weather you're a sports fan or not, we can all take a play from the Lakers playbook to make business easier.

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