

What to Do When Things Go Wrong

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by Jacqueline Freeman

1. WHY DO THINGS GO WRONG?

What images did you conjure up when you first saw yourself running your own business?

The pleasurable comfort of easy living? The invigorating thrill of total autonomy? Visions of triumphantly leading the masses to freedom?

If you've owned a business before, you're familiar with the fact that owning ANY business means you are often "Head of the Problem-Solving Department."

People who don't have entrepreneurial backgrounds prior to Network Marketing are often surprised when everything doesn't go smoothly. REALLY surprised. After all, a multi-billion dollar corporation ought to have it all together, right?

When you own a small business, you have singular problems - an employee misses work unexpectedly and her clients are all in the waiting room expecting to be seen by ... someone. Or it's 11 a.m. and the stove in your restaurant stopped working. Or the young guy driving delivery for you just got pulled over for going 25mph in a 55mph zone and the cop finds out he's stoned. Individual problems that seem enormous when they happen to you, the small business owner.

When you have a bigger business, you still have problems -- they're just on a grander scale. Problems crop up in ANY interface that involves -- PEOPLE!

People and computers, people who can't add numbers, people who program software that forgets to bill customers, people who sleep through the alarm, people who forget to do things. (Okay, sometimes it IS the weather.)

When a BIG business like this expands, imagine what can happen!

All companies have their share of difficulties - unfulfilled agreements from companies we interface with, in-house computer glitches, staff shortages, and oversights in supplies-on-hand, miscommunications, and general mishaps.

Looking back it's pretty easy to say, "Oh, we should have ..."

Humans aren't wired to know the answers BEFORE we try something. That's why we're blessed with hindsight. But, as NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV so wisely noted, "Mistakes are the portals of discovery." The more we learn, the wiser we become.

Network Marketing Companies sometimes finds them selves in the middle of mega-problems when we've made arrangements with outside providers.

NONE of them believe us when we say we will have thousands of new customers in our first week/month. They sign contracts saying they're sure they can handle the influx and then are overwhelmed when we really DO show up en masse!

These partner companies overloaded their systems beyond capacity -- all because we DID what we said we'd do - showed up and brought all our friends.

This explains WHY things go wrong on the company's side. Next let's look at what YOU can do about handling problems that affect YOUR business.

2. WHAT TO DO WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Problems are a fact of life and they come with ANY business. Our personal skill at handling those problems is a HUGE factor in whether our businesses succeed long-term -- or not. They're tests of commitment for us.

Any distributor more than a month old has been through a few glitches by now. Though they're challenging, they're not impossible. Here's how we handle them.

First, do an attitude adjustment.

No matter how upset you get, this isn't the companies problem. Your neighbor/aunt/co-worker is YOUR personal customer and they see YOU as the Company. And that's right -- to them you ARE THE COMPANY!

Think like an OWNER, not an employee.

Take responsibility for everything you CAN control.

Your customers' satisfaction with your business IS something you have power over. Take charge of how YOU interact with your customers.

BE THE COMPANY.

Don't go the route of a helpless employee. Do not speak poorly about the company, or you'll undermine any future faith your customer might have in you or the company.

How you treat your customers when problems crop up tells them how much they can count on you.

Most importantly, STAY IN TOUCH with ALL your customers.

Do NOT ignore them. That's what a normal business would do -- pretend nothing unusual is going on and hope no one notices -- but it's not what YOUR PERSONAL CARE BUSINESS does.

Call, write, or email each customer who is affected and explain that the current situation is one of the prices of success and rapid growth.

Ask them all to bear with you a little longer. If they can't wait, let them know you understand. Let them know that you appreciate their business, and will let them know when the problem is solved.

TAKE CHARGE of the situation.

Find a SOLUTION.

Demonstrate that we CARE.

Problematical as your situation may be, don't get alarmed. In MOST cases, exemplary customer care can help you weather most any storm. Instead of complaining, "I don't know what's going on with them," speak from a position of ownership. Say ... "We've had some problems because the supplier, didn't anticipate the volume we are capable of generating.

"The company is creating a fix, but I've got a few solutions you and I can do in the meantime. (Suggestions: 'Hang in there,' 'Temporarily use XYZ,' or whatever else you come up with).

"I apologize for the inconvenience and want you to know that our company is a really good company who, in this situation, is growing faster than our supplier was able to keep up.

"On the plus side, an advantage of being this size is that we can create quick solutions. So on my end, I'll keep you posted about what, when, and how this is resolved."

Then ask a very important question, one that tells you how much of an issue this problem IS right now.

"Tell me, what would YOU like me to do to make this right?"

This tells your customer that he or she is VERY important and that YOU are LISTENING. Some customers will simply tell you to keep them posted about any changes, but most just want to know that you're aware of the situation and are watching out for them.

A very few will need help making some changes. If you handle those well, often even the ones most hurt by a problem may remain your customers for the long haul because they identify YOU as the business and they know they can trust your judgment and that you care. Problems affect ALL businesses, and most people know that.

The big difference is that YOU are in there bulldogging for them. That's special.

Key Points:

Tell them you are aware of the problem

Explain (ever-so-briefly) why it's happening

Say what your solutions are

Send cookies

Okay, I tucked that last one in there, but it's important. It serves two purposes. First, it's an apology for any inconvenience. Second, it keeps our businesses personal.

Every time a problem comes up, welcome it as an opportunity to demonstrate extraordinary personal service. When the waters are calm, THAT is the time to be surprised. With all the things that CAN go wrong, it's amazing how RIGHT stuff goes most of the time. --Jacqueline

3. WISE WORDS

"There are no mistakes. The events we bring upon ourselves, no matter how unpleasant, are necessary in order to learn what we need to learn. Whatever steps we take, they're necessary to reach the places we've chosen to go."

--Richard Bach, author "The Bridge Across Forever"