

Developing a Key Passion for Success

Written by Steve Marr
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I was asked to consult with a young entrepreneur wanting to start an ice cream store. “Bill” agreed to see me mostly because his father asked him to spend time with me. Bill was shocked by my first question, which was, “Do you like ice cream?” Bill stared back and didn’t really answer. He countered my question by asking if I liked the money ice cream can make.

I told him that I don’t recommend starting a business for any other reason except serving customers. I explained that if you’re going to be in the ice cream business, you need to enjoy ice cream. You must like making ice cream and ice cream-based treats. You must enjoy the happy faces of your customers and their families when they enjoy your ice cream. You must love creating an experience they want to enjoy again. The ice cream business is not about a methodology that will make your cash register ring.

Bill was asking what difference it made whether you liked ice cream or not as long as you made money selling it. I reminded him that when you start a business, you’re going to be working 60, 70 or maybe 80 hours on some weeks. You will serve customers behind the counter, maintain your store, keep the books, hire and train staff and much more to make the business successful. If you don’t like what you’re doing and have a passion for your customers, you will burn out and likely fail and at the same time feel miserable.

Despite my advice Bill started the business. A year later, he sold out at a loss. He didn’t really like ice cream.

When an entrepreneur starts a business, he or she needs to focus on one major goal: a desire to serve a specific target group of customers, keep them happy and enjoy serving them. Otherwise, the entrepreneur is better off working for an employer at an hourly or salaried job.

Customers pay a business owner not because the owner needs the money, but because the customers need their product or service. The owner earns cash by finding customers who need what they offer and meet those demands in a competitive way. The entrepreneur becomes excited every time they improve the life and circumstance of a customer, even when a customer

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doesn't express gratitude for it. Without this passion for helping customers, a business will fail or struggle.

We see an example with one of the Lord's parables, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it." (Matthew 13:45-46, NIV) When we start a business, we need to develop the merchant's passion for one valued pearl. If our passion is simply to make money, we will never develop that focus. Serve your customers from your passion to help them, and watch your business grow.