



PETRA PEOPLE

4 BUSINESS LESSONS FROM THE GOLF COURSE



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LIFE LESSONS for BUSINESS OWNERS

I'm obsessed with the game of golf. Maybe it's because I didn't play competitive sports as a kid. Outside of a few seasons of little league baseball, I never competed in a team or individual sports growing up. So when I started playing golf in my early 20s, it was my first time to experience the thrill of sports competition.

More importantly, though, golf has taught me four valuable lessons that align with my experiences as an entrepreneur and business coach.

1. Focus on the routine, not the goal.

During a recent round of golf, I noticed that I had a great score through the first 16 holes. And while I had two more tough holes to play, I started to think that about achieving a personal record for a low score at that course. From that moment forward, all I could think about was the goal – the final score. I couldn't wait to tell my friends about the low score that I hadn't even reached yet. Clearly I lost my focus on the shot routine that had worked so well throughout the round and I ended up finishing with a double-bogey on both of the last two holes. My final score was still good, but it was certainly not the low score I had imagined earlier.

Businesses should have the same approach – focus on activities, not end results. An example is setting a quarterly goal of \$300,000 in new revenue for a salesperson. If the salesperson only focuses on the lagging indicator (\$300,000 in new revenue), he or she may lose focus on the activity that drives new revenue. In this instance, the daily or weekly activity could be visiting with eight decision makers per week. Setting a goal is important, but it's just the first step in creating a plan to accomplish it. By clearly defining the activity that will lead to achieving the goal, the salesperson will have a plan that is easier to manage and creates more focus.

2. Accept events outside of your control with a positive attitude.

Recently I hit a tee shot that was just slightly off target. My ball was headed for a small hill with a cluster of trees on top. I thought the angle of the hill would cause the ball to bounce back towards the fairway, but instead it jumped unexpectedly up the hill and landed directly in the middle of the trees, leaving me with no chance of advancing the ball towards the green. I resisted the urge to get frustrated over an unlucky bounce that was outside of my control. More importantly, I stayed focused on hitting the next shot that ultimately led me to escape with just a bogey on the hole.

Just like a bad bounce on the golf course, it's common in business to experience events that are outside of your control. For example, a client suddenly goes out of business, a freak weather event dramatically impacts sales or a key employee has a personal tragedy that takes them away from the business. It's best to stay focused on moving forward with a positive attitude. You can't change the past, but you can influence the future.

3. Be gracious and humble.

I recently competed against a skilled golfer with four years of experience at the collegiate level. Throughout the day I missed several short putts inside five feet that would have turned the match in my favor. But despite my poor putting, I was able to keep the game close through 17 holes. On the final hole, I had a three-foot putt to make birdie and tie the score. Unfortunately, I missed and lost the match. My opponent told me as we walked off the course that he was secretly pulling for me to make that last putt. He recounted that he had experienced similar tough days on the course. His comments are a great example of being gracious and humble, even in victory. They also reminded me to focus on the positive results of the day, like that I had competed extremely well against a great golfer.

This holds true in the business world, as well. My first major contract that I negotiated after graduating college was to sell a \$250,000 piece of equipment to a Fortune 500 company. During an early meeting with the SVP of Procurement, the executive asked me a direct question that startled me, "What is the profit margin your company will make on this deal?" At first I wasn't sure how to respond. The executive, sensing my surprise and inexperience, then stated, "Son, we know you're going to make a profit. We just want to make sure it's a fair profit. It needs to be a win-win situation for both of us." A "win-win" solution allows both parties to walk away with a positive experience and receive value out of the deal.

4. Enlist a coach to see the things you can't.

The last lesson learned might be the most obvious, but it may also be the most important. While I can learn proper golf mechanics from books, websites, TV shows and radio programs, my personal golf coach can see things about my swing that I can't see, or maybe I can't recognize. It's not just that he can watch my swing from different perspectives; he also has the experience of working with hundreds of golfers with similar problems. His perspective and experience has made it easier and faster for me to achieve my long-term goals as a golfer. I may have been able to get there on my own, but it certainly would have taken longer and been a more difficult journey.

It's very common for business leaders to get caught up in the day-to-day tactics of business. This is especially true for entrepreneurs who are naturally inclined to be problem solvers, so they tend to focus on the latest "fire" in the business. As a coach, it is my responsibility to help the owner and leadership team identify opportunities, strengths and weaknesses that maybe they can't see. And since I work with many companies, I can provide relevant experiences that allow my clients to grow faster and avoid common pitfalls. Whether it's a business coach, board of advisors or peer-based accountability group, it's important to surround yourself with people that can help you see things that you can't.

This story was originally published in the Austin Business Journal.

THE PETRA EXPERIENCE

The Petra Experience is like a Mental Marathon of focused effort to create a specific set of priorities and a planned process to achieve them... as a team.

Looking to change your business life - forever?

The daily grind of growing a business is tough... it doesn't have to be that way. We work from our own business experiences while focusing on your business – as coach and an accountability partner. We implement the Petra Process in a way that ensures it “sticks” then we stay engaged to keep you on your path to success and less frustration. We don't want this to be just another thing you start – then it gets ignored and finally dies... let's stop that cycle in your business. The Petra Program 'clarifies' what is most important to be done – by whom, by when – **AND** creates an accountability structure to ensure **IT GETS DONE.**

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