



## Extreme Business Advice

(Don't Read This if You Are a Wimp)

Tough business tips from one expert.

October 1, 2007

By: George Cloutier

Running your own business is rewarding, but nobody ever said it was easy. Sometimes it's useful to review just what it takes to achieve success as a business owner. George Cloutier, founder and CEO of American Management Services, offers these harsh but necessary reminders of what it takes:

**Take Full Responsibility for Success or Failure and End Denial.** The failure or success of your business is your responsibility, and you must not blame others. If your salesman isn't performing, you must take it upon yourself to fix it.

**Eat Your Vegetables First Everyone has a daily to-do list.** When you write out your list, complete the tasks that you have been agonizing over for days (or even weeks!). Have you been thinking about raising your prices? Raise them. Is one of your employees not working out as well as you'd hoped? Fire him or her. Then move on to your easier tasks.

**Demand Performance and Pay Accordingly.** When you sign a contract with an employee, you agree to pay them for what they promised they could do: perform. Salary increases should correlate to performance. Better performance equals better pay; flat performance equals flat salary.

**Delegate, Don't Abdicate.** While delegation can be helpful in a small business, it's important not to relinquish all responsibility. If your employees aren't performing, the responsibility falls on your shoulders. Institute a reporting

system so that both managers and employees are held accountable for their actions.

**The Right Kind of Teamwork.** It's imperative that you not allow the worst-performing member of the team to set the performance standard for the rest of the team. You want your team to rise to the highest common denominator, not sink to the lowest. If, for example, you have a "socializer" who is derailing colleagues too much with an overabundance of chitchat when others are trying to work, take care of the problem immediately.

**In Family Businesses, Square Pegs Never Fit in Round Holes.** In my view, the best family business is that which consists of only one family member. For the sake of your company, please don't hire your son, who is six credits shy of his degree in chemical engineering, to manage your finances just so he can be a part of the family business. It won't do him any good and it certainly won't do the business any good.

**Give Up Golf!** Harsh, I know, but business never gets done on the golf course. It's an excuse to get out of the office!

George Cloutier is the founder and CEO of American Management Services. He also serves as chairman of Partner America, a small business growth program that provides management expertise to small business. For more information visit [www.amserv.com](http://www.amserv.com) or [www.partneramerica.com](http://www.partneramerica.com)