

What is Winning the Game of Business?

For years I thought success meant accomplishment in business, making lots of money, and earning prestige and status. And, if I did all of these things, I'd be rewarded by feeling great.

I had a beautiful wife, two healthy, wonderful kids. We even had the dog and the white picket fence. All my life, I'd been taught that goals like these, when achieved, guaranteed good feelings.

So I believed, worked very hard, and here's what I accomplished:

- A 5-million dollar company with 50 employees,
- Built my own dream house,
- Plenty of money,
- New cars in driveway,
- Elected town official,
- Flourishing retail business in my home town,
- Awards for public service,
- Trophies for sports...and even more!

There is one goal missing from that list:

- Happiness

Did all these achievements supply me with happiness, with contentment? Many thought they would. I sure did, but was I wrong!

For two busy decades I pursued the above goals. I was all about attainment. I'd do just about anything if I thought it would help me attain and thus, feel good.

Remember: I had no idea -- I was all about achievement -- while I was working so hard to achieve.

I was completely missing the real point. I was painting the car and not checking the engine. The outside of the car, my life, looked great: Shiny, clean, impressive to the world. I thought maintaining that was the correct and proper goal. I didn't realize for the vehicle to operate properly, there were complex inner workings to be looked at, understood, and worked on. I had not lifted my own hood and looked inside at the engine within me.

I wasn't happy.

After every milestone was passed, and after that first flush of achievement faded, I noticed it was replaced by an inexplicable feeling of emptiness. I was baffled as to why I wasn't happy. I just didn't know what was missing.

Being an achiever, I set out to fix this situation. It was dawning on me that maybe I needed to lift the hood. So I read every personal development book and watched and/or took every program, seminar and workshop I could find. Still, the reason for my lack of happiness wasn't clear.

A feeling of guilt haunted me or, I hounded myself for being ungrateful. I said to myself: Look at what you've got! You should feel happy? You ungrateful man!

This thinking, this self-punishment, only added to my gloom.

I spent the next five years working on what was going on inside my engine. It's intricate: Inside oneself. I checked old wiring, and found out I was not 'hard-wired' to certain behaviors, after all. I examined my beliefs, old ideas and saw they needed work, or even replacement.

As I moved deeper into the elaborate mechanism of that engine, of my Self, I began to see that I'd launched my life from the wrong premise. When the pistol was fired and the man in the game of life yelled: "Go!" I took off running, like most people, only seeing each goal as a hurdle to be overcome. I also wanted to be out ahead of the pack and often I was.

I didn't see there was an entirely different race being run, further away, not obvious and with few guideposts. Decades back, I hadn't understood what my goal should have been. I hadn't known what I really wanted. I just took off running. Few or no questions asked.

The premise I'd been unaware of wasn't what I thought I should want. It wasn't even more accomplishments to bring me more recognition. It also wasn't what would generate the most money -- rather, it was:

What would make me happy?

I'd never even thought about that! I hadn't known such an idea could even be a goal.

I'd forgotten, or never understood that I had certain core values that were unique to me. When I wasn't honoring those values I was out of tune with what truly mattered to me, so I lived in conflict all the time. Inside I was being torn apart! Now I suddenly saw the engine under the hood: my first breakthrough! That led me to discover what was missing in my life.

It was: I'd lost touch with who I really was. I found out I had a soul and it was crying out: What am I here for, what do I really want?

I discovered I was a human being, not a human doing.

How do I want to be and to feel? I had no idea!

This was the beginning for me. I saw I needed to be in a very different race to really win in the game of life. I also saw I need help to train for this other way of living life.

I found out about life coaching. I started to work with a coach and for the last 4 years I've had incredible results. I was able to identify my core values; I was able to look at the whole picture of myself not just the one-dimensional character that I had produced, that had blindly run that other race. I saw many of my core beliefs were based on old assumptions that I had never tested for truth.

This helped me identify what really matters most to me. I learned that I'm no longer willing to live out of integrity with those core values. I had to learn how to use my own inner guidance system.

I learned:

What feels good is in alignment with my core values; and what does not is not.

Sounds simple! Simple yes, but not necessarily easy.

I had a powerful struggle learning to override the beliefs I held that blocked my way to real contentment. I also had to struggle to believe that what I really wanted and desired, was possible.

I did the hard work.

Today my life is filled with so much joy, fulfillment, freedom, balance, calmness and connection.

I am happy.

Five years ago if you had asked me: "What's lacking in your life?" I'd never even guessed that joy, fulfillment, freedom, balance, calmness and connection were the things I was missing. That these were what most mattered to me.

Now when I move ahead toward a business or personal goals I have clarity behind my actions. I understand my real purpose for taking these actions. I am in alignment with what matters most to me. The difference has been monumental.

That is truly winning the game: When you learn what matters most to you.

About the Author

Steve Kennedy is a professionally trained and certified co-active coach with a passion for "The Game of Business." Steve new book, 'Winning the Game of Business: The Entrepreneur's Quest for Ultimate Success', is due late Spring 2007. To learn more visit:

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