

13 Tactics for Winners

1. Know where you are going.

The first and most important tactic for winners is to know where you are going. As the old saying goes, “If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll end up somewhere else!” A clear and constant focus on your main aim allows you to make the main thing the main thing all the time and not get distracted by side issues. It also provides clarity to your staff and creates unity of purpose within the organization.

The aim in business is to have profitable customers who stay a long time. Every policy you make, every process you design, every decision you make, every action you take and every word you speak should take you towards that goal.

Having a vision is an important part of turning possibilities into reality. Because business is the activity of creating value, your vision should be of the value you will create for your customers. Try completing this sentence: “We see a world where” That should be your vision. Your mission is then to do something to make that vision a reality. A vision and mission built around creating value for customers will not only tell your staff where they are going, it will motivate them to get there.

2. Believe in yourself.

Winners believe in themselves. They have confidence in their ability and their actions broadcast that confidence. They do not let self-doubts and fear of failure limit their potential. This self-belief is one of the major factors determining whether you win or you come second. As Henry Ford said, “Whether you think you can or you think you can’t, you’re right!”

In business, you need to believe in your products and services, and also in the value these create for your customers. You cannot successfully sell something you do not believe in. Your doubts and lack of enthusiasm will come through to the customer. You also need to make sure your staff believe in your products and services. Every member of staff is a potential salesperson who will work 24/7 telling everyone about you if they believe you create outstanding value for your customers. Don’t just train for product knowledge. Sell your company and your products and services to your staff.

If you are a business owner or manager, you also need to believe in your staff. These people are your organization and they affect your ability to win. As Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonalds said, “Slogans are moving, systems are effective, numbers are impressive but people make it happen.” But they won’t if they don’t think you believe in them.

3. Be open to opportunities.

Winners know we come across more opportunities in a day than we could possibly develop in a lifetime. The trouble is, most of us don't see them because we are not open to seeing them. We are stuck working in our businesses instead of on them. Velcro was invented because someone noticed burrs sticking to their trousers. Before that, how many thousands of people had pulled burrs off their clothing without seeing the opportunity for a new product?

In business, the opportunities lie in two places. The first is in the problems your customers are having doing business with you. Fix these and you may gain a competitive advantage. The second is in problems that are stopping your customers from succeeding. Business customers want to earn more profit and consumers want a better lifestyle. Any problems stopping them from doing these are opportunities for you to create new benefits and therefore more value. How can you be open to these opportunities? Get to know your customers and their businesses. Your customers will tell you everything you need to know to succeed if you ask and if you listen.

When you are open to opportunities you will see there are more than your time and resources allow you to develop. Therefore, you need to be able to make choices, set priorities and stay focused on the opportunities you have chosen to develop.

4. Set challenging goals.

Winners set targets that stretch themselves and their staff because they know challenging goals bring out the best in people. Dare to dream. Walt Disney said, "If you can dream it you can do it. Remember, this whole thing was started by a mouse!" If your goals do not scare you a little, if they do not keep you awake at night, if they do not inspire you, they are not challenging enough. The danger is not in aiming too high and falling short. It is in aiming too low and reaching your goal because you don't know how much more you could have achieved had you aimed higher.

In business, your three main goals must be (1) to retain the customers you've already got, (2) to maximize their spend with you and (3) to look after them so well they are inspired to tell others how wonderful you are, thus creating the word of mouth that will bring in others. Settle for nothing less than retaining 100% of your customers, for getting 100% of their share of wallet and for having every customer be so impressed they want to tell at least nine others how fantastic you are.

Do not think about the reasons you cannot achieve these goals. Instead, ask yourself, "What would we have to do to achieve these challenging goals?"

5. Accept responsibility.

Winners know the responsibility for fulfilling their dreams lies with themselves. As the saying goes, "If it's going to be, it's up to me." Successful

people do not sit around waiting for someone else to make things happen. They know the power to succeed or fail is theirs. To understand this is both empowering and inspiring. It releases you from being dependent on others. It reminds you there is always something you can do no matter what anyone else may do or whatever else may happen to impede your progress. Best of all, nobody can ever take that power away from you!

Winners also don't blame others when things go wrong. They know a culture of fear stops people from trying to win. Inspire your staff to accept responsibility and to take ownership. Ask them what they can do to help you win and then ask what you can do to help them do that.

In business, winners know if their customers win, they win. Therefore, tell your staff to be on the look out for problems customers are having and then to do whatever they think is reasonable. Tell them they will not get in trouble for doing something wrong but they will if they do nothing.

6. Build desire.

Winners know desire enables them to overcome what may seem like insurmountable obstacles. Are you and your staff hungry, hungry enough to really want to win? Will you do whatever it takes to succeed – with the bounds of the law, your ethics and your values? Remind yourself of your dream by visualising success, taste victory, picture yourself living the dream.

To win means to change. Winning organizations are in a constant state of change as they adapt to new conditions or develop new ways of operating to overcome obstacles. Help your staff understand change is what you must do when you cannot keep doing what you are doing now. Motivate them to change by helping them understand why you cannot keep doing what you're doing now and what the benefits will be **for them** if you make these changes. Then involve them in working out the best way to get from where you currently are to where you want to be.

7. Demonstrate courage.

Fear is the biggest obstacle to winning. Fear of losing and fear of embarrassment are the two big fears that paralyse us, like possums in the headlights. Another is the fear of being different. Humans are herd animals and like the anonymity that comes from doing what everyone else is doing. The America's Cup yacht that heads off on the opposite tack calls attention to itself and that is uncomfortable for many. Uncertainty also causes fear. The yacht on the opposite tack will not know until it crosses back whether it is in the lead and many cannot cope with that anxiety.

Attempting to win is not for the faint-hearted. Winners have the courage to go where nobody has gone before. They know if they take a different route, they may or may not win but if they take the same route as everyone else, they will almost certainly lose. In business, we win by having a competitive advantage and a competitive advantage comes from being different from the opposition, not simply better.

The American poet, Robert Frost, wrote:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Do you have the courage to take the road less travelled?
Do your staff feel safe enough to take the road less travelled?

8. Learn from failure.

Of all the fears, fear of failure is the biggest single obstacle to winning but you've never failed until you've given up. Winners know they haven't failed until they've stopped trying. They also know failure is just an opportunity to begin again more intelligently.

In business, to see your weaknesses or acknowledge your failures is essential because to win, you must constantly improve at a significant rate. In fact, you need to improve by 20% each year just to stay in the same place. Where can you go to find your weak spots, the aspects of your behaviour or your business that are stopping you from reaching your potential? Talk to your customers. They will tell you everything you need to know to succeed. In fact, they are probably telling you every day. We just don't listen. Complaints, suggestions and even frequently asked questions all tell us where we can improve. What winners have is the self-confidence to admit they are wrong. The first step to fixing a problem is to face it and the second is to learn from your mistake. Once you've understood this, create a safe environment where your staff feel comfortable admitting their mistakes and learning from them.

Sure, mistakes can cost money but consider that to be a tuition fee. One businessman whose staff member had made a costly mistake was asked if he was going to fire the chap. "Are you kidding," he answered. "I just spent \$3,000 teaching him how to do the job properly!"

9. Make honesty the best policy.

Cheats don't prosper for long, especially in business where the aim is to have profitable customers who stay a long time. For that to happen, your customers must trust you. Trust comes from acting honestly and with integrity. It also comes from doing what you said you would do.

Every day, you and your staff will be required to choose between acting honestly or dishonestly. Understand, there is no such thing as white lies, just lies. You cannot be partly honest just as you cannot be partly trustworthy. Also, it is not enough for you to be honest. People must believe you are honest.

What is at stake is your reputation and this is your most valuable asset. Winners know they must always act in a way that enhances their reputation and sometimes that means taking it on the chin. Just as winners in sports know that sometimes you have to pass the ball backwards to go forwards,

winners in business know they may have to take a backward step by admitting a mistake or incurring a cost so their customers can trust them to put them first.

10. Strive for Excellence.

Excellence is the pinnacle, achieved by few. It comes from maintaining high standards and from continually striving to meet them. Only people who will not compromise their standards, who pay attention to detail and who will not accept mediocrity achieve excellence. Winners know near enough is NOT good enough.

Research shows that winners practise things they cannot do, whereas those who come second, practise the things they can do but not very well. It is less frustrating to practise the things you can do, even if poorly. It takes more discipline to work on those things you cannot do but need to do to win.

In business, excellence comes from going the extra mile. Winners look for problems customers have they would just love the business to solve but know they cannot reasonably expect the business to do that. Then when the business does solve them, the customer is blown away. That is what creates loyalty, willingness to pay a little more and raving fans.

11. Persevere but don't perseverate.

It's not ability that makes winners but persistence. Nothing worthwhile comes easily. Edison tried hundreds of times before he got the electric light bulb to work. "It's 99% perspiration and only 1% inspiration," he said. The mark of a winner is not what they do on their first attempt, but what they do on the 1,000th! In nature, the animal who stops running after its prey starves. The one who stops running away from its hunter gets eaten.

But persisting to do something that does not work is called perseveration. Winners persist but they change their approach based on prior experience and feedback from others. In other words, they don't give up but they do learn from their mistakes. As in nature, winners in business are those who adapt best and persevere the longest.

12. Take action.

If three frogs were sitting on a log and one decided to jump off, how many frogs would be left on the log? The answer is three because deciding to do something and is not the same thing as doing it. Unless you act, none of the above matters because without action, nothing happens. Understand your sphere of influence and take action where you can and don't worry about what you cannot control or influence.

In business, you need to make sure that every item discussed in a meeting ends in an action plan: Who is going to do what by when and when will it be reviewed. When staff come to you with a problem, help them to find the solution and then ask: "So, what are you going to do and how can I

help you?" When a customer comes to you with a request, find a way to do it and then do it. When a customer has a complaint, apologize and then ask them what they would like you to do, and do it. At the end of the day review your 'To Do' list and look at what you have actually done. Then evaluate your performance against what you actually did.

13. Love what you do.

Winners know if they find something they enjoy doing, they'll never work a day in their life. If you don't enjoy what you are doing, you won't do it with enthusiasm and nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

In business, this means loving looking after your customers because you *are* in the customer business. Winners understand 100% of their profits and probably 100% of all their revenue comes from customers. If you don't enjoy looking after them, find something else to do.

Conclusion

No one, be they a staff member or the business owner, sets out to lose but often they do lose because they have not employed these 13 tactics for winners.

These tactics are not easy to employ. But successful people are prepared to do the things unsuccessful people are not prepared to do.