

Expert Tips & Tactics

Motivation

Have you ever looked at the reasons that you stay in business? Do you work to stay in business because you fear bankruptcy or because you want to retire early?

When I opened my martial arts school, it never entered my mind that I could fail...it was simply not an option. So why *did* I open a business? I became an entrepreneur because my on-campus club was losing its training space and the thought of not continuing to train in martial arts was unacceptable to me. I was being motivated to enter the world of business ownership by a desire to avoid a negative consequence if I failed to act. As a business owner, however, I have a vision of having the freedom and ability to travel, write, spend time with my family and teach martial arts. I am motivated to succeed by the benefits I stand to gain. Also, I love watching people grow and find the thrill of watching my students and employees learn and meet new goals to be one of the most exhilarating experiences. On the other hand I'd rather go to the dentist than make marketing calls. The pain avoider in me knows that making marketing calls helps to keep my business thrive, the pleasure seeker in me knows that teaching great classes keeps my clients coming back for more, year after year.

Your own answers to my initial question will tell you a lot about whether you are pain avoider or a pleasure seeker. As I just illustrated, depending upon the circumstances, I can be both.

Our childhood experiences teach us that the pain associated with the threat of loss can be a powerful motivator (if you don't finish your dinner, you can't have dessert) and as adults many of us tend to be motivated more by pain avoidance than by pleasure seeking (if you don't start coming to work on time, I'll have to let you go). Psychologists in fact, tell us that most people will not change their behaviors unless faced with a significant financial, emotional, spiritual or health crisis. Our comfort zones, regardless of how uncomfortable they actually are, are seemingly better than the fear of uncertain outcomes (read: pain) associated with change.

O.K., so bring this home to your clients. How do you motivate your clients? Some of your clients will be pain avoiders and some pleasure seekers. Some will oscillate between the two like a ping-pong ball and can change from being a pleasure seeker to a pain avoider as a function of the kind of day they just had at work.

Do you take the time to study your clients to find out what motivates each of them? Or, do you simply apply the motivational band-aid of offering specific (but uniform) products to all your clients?

Learning when to motivate using a negative motivator (I cannot offer a discount unless you purchase today) versus a positive motivator (you've chosen one of our most reliable products, that's great! Now, if you wish we can help you to improve your product's efficiency by adding this widget) is much harder.

Learning how to motivate in the right way at the right time shows real commitment to your clients, a deep desire to understand them and builds a powerful deposit in their trust account with you....all of which are pleasure-seeking reasons that will help you reduce attrition in your client base. Or...if that didn't work....You can either wonder why your clients don't seem to buy or return or you can learn the art of motivation so that they will return to your business and bring their friends. It's your call, but I strongly urge you to look at motivational cues provided by your clients as they respond to your business style...you can learn a lot from them.

Chris Dewey is a university professor and martial arts business owner. He holds black belt ranks in judo, jujitsu, taekwondo and hapkido, and has been training since 1968. Chris can be reached at chris.p.dewey@gmail.com.