

## Expert Tips & Tactics

### Stagnation

We all go through times of stagnation. We all know times when the juice just doesn't flow any more. It happens in every life and can occur in every circumstance of our lives: It can happen at school, in our relationships, our careers, our hobbies and our creative activities.

At these moments we have two choices: Walk away or find the source of joy again. On the one hand, we can choose to see times of stagnation as moments of re-evaluation and re-commitment which ultimately lead to times of renewal and rejuvenation. Conversely, we can see these moments as insurmountable challenges from which we will ultimately walk away.

I am fond of Frank Herbert's line in Dune: "*Without new experiences, something within us sleeps, and seldom awakens.*" When we stagnate in our businesses we may be falling asleep and losing contact with the essence of what we do...the novelty has worn off or perhaps the daily repetition has led to boredom.

As a martial artist who started training in 1968, you can be fairly certain that there have been times when my fires of passion have burned a little low. There have been times when the desire was simply not there and the will to continue training was seemingly not as great as the desire to do something else. But in all that time, I have never been able to walk away. This is my journey and there is much that I still have to learn. In the roots of the martial arts are lessons that I have only just begun to learn and other lessons that I have not yet even begun to see. When my martial arts feel stale, I am reminded of the line that: "*At higher states of awareness, everything we previously held to be true, is false.*" So often, on my martial journey I have discovered that some strongly held belief about what I do turns out to be a stumbling block to my continued growth.

I think that in part this goes to the growth of a business vision. We each begin with some sort of vision about what we think being a business owner will be. At some point we see that the vision is actually limiting our growth and then we either adapt our vision or it hold us back and lead to stagnation.

At the end of a minor personal slump I was speaking to one of my students about the core skills of Judo. Basically, all of Judo can be summed up in two core skills: 1. Learning to push and yield at the right moment effectively and efficiently and 2. Learning to fall safely and get up again. This is pretty simple

stuff and yet simultaneously it is profound stuff because these are also the core skills of communication, business success and relationship building. Now, I don't know about you...but I can see some application here in running a business.

So for me the crystal of Judo had turned again and shown me a new facet. By watching my students I had reduced everything I have learned in more than forty years of training to these two core skills. I found the whole thing highly amusing. More than forty years of training...only to see that it is all about pushing and falling, pushing and falling. But in that moment a new light went on in my mind and my heart and I made a new commitment to myself, to the process.

Whenever we have the opportunity to see things that we have done for decades through the eyes of a child, we have the opportunity to see something new.

So this is my advice: During times of stagnation look for new lessons in old places. See with eyes that have never looked and expect to be surprised by the results.

In the words of Frank Herbert: "The sleeper must awaken!"

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