

Addressing Key Frustrations

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The Approach

As an E-Myth Business Coach, I often talk to small business owners trying to solve key frustrations. My advice to them is to search for underlying causes of frustration, i.e., the business conditions that are causing the problems. This is a fundamental step that our clients sometimes ignore. Clients will often try to 'fix' a frustrating problem without understanding why the problem occurred. A result of this sort of 'fix' is often to blame others or blame themselves.

A Blame-free Environment

Given frustrations, and instead of blaming themselves thinking "it's all my fault" or blaming others thinking "it's all their fault" business owners must ask themselves, "What is causing these frustrations to occur? What standard procedure is missing (or isn't being followed) that is allowing these frustrations to exist?"

If business owners can think in terms of searching for the cause of the problem, rather than concentrating on fixing blame, they will be on their way to building a system to repetitively and predictably solve that problem. If one continues to be reactive and implement quick-and-dirty sorts of fixes, the frustrations may temporarily subside, but they will always return.

I've often asked my clients to stop and notice when they feel frustrated in their business. I advise them to consider exactly what is going on in the business at that point in time, and to write it down in a notebook. That way, they can more easily see what the frustrations are, and can examine them more closely. Example entries may read 'Bob in Sales was late again today, missed an important customer telephone call', or 'Shipping dept. didn't send package on time, customer didn't receive package as promised', or "electrician mistake resulted in 1.0 hour power outage." Noting these frustrations will help them to examine true causes & effects later on.

Underlying Conditions

After noting problems for a few weeks, clients can reflect on their notes and deal with them strategically. Common themes of frustration should be more clearly visible, such as multiple occurrences in one department, trouble on a given team, more problems on Tuesdays, more issues at 1 PM, delivery problems when its raining, sales trouble at the beginning of each month, issues with particular clients, etc. If common elements can be identified and analyzed, it will be easier to systematically pinpoint what has to change,

and to document standard procedures to deal with the issues. Without this shift in thinking, expect key frustrations to regularly return.