



A Single Powerful Principle for Success

For some time now, I've wanted to write a piece on punctuality. As good fortune would have it, Dan Kennedy's article appeared in my mailbox this morning and I couldn't improve on Dan's piece if I tried, nor could I agree with him more.

In his book *No B.S. Time Management for Entrepreneurs*, Dan said that while there may be an exception somewhere, in his 35-plus years of taking note of this, everybody he'd met and gotten to know who devoutly adhered to this discipline became exceptionally successful, happy and respected. Everybody he'd met and gotten to know who ignored this discipline failed, or fell far short of their potential. Is it possible that this one discipline alone is so powerful it literally determines success or failure? Dan also said:

The discipline I'm talking about is punctuality -- being where you're supposed to be when you're supposed to be there, as promised, without exception, without excuse, every time, all the time. I cannot tell you how important I believe this is. But I'll tell you some of the reasons why I believe in its indescribably great importance.

First of all, being punctual gives you the right—the positioning—to expect and demand that others treat your time with the utmost respect. You cannot reasonably hope to have others treat your time with respect if you show little or no respect for theirs. So if you're not punctual, you have no leverage, no moral authority. But the punctual person gains that advantage over staff, associates, vendors, clients, everybody.

It is my conviction that a person who cannot keep appointments on time, cannot keep scheduled commitments or cannot stick to a schedule cannot be trusted in other ways either. There is a link between respect for others' time and respect for others' opinions, property, rights, agreements and contracts. A person reveals a great deal about himself by his punctuality or lack of punctuality. As a general rule of thumb, I use this as a means of determining whether or not I want to do business with someone. And, when I violate this, as I occasionally foolishly do, I always get burned.

Let me give you one example. Dozens of years ago, a person seeking to do business with me arranged to meet me at an airport, where I had a 90-minute layover. We agreed, and I confirmed by fax that we would meet at my arrival gate, at my arrival time, and then go to that airline's club room right there on the concourse for the meeting. When I arrived, the guy wasn't there. Some ten minutes later, I'm paged and told to meet him in the main terminal where he is because he ran late getting to the airport. It takes me ten minutes on the tram to get to the main terminal, and I have to cut another ten minutes of our meeting to allow time to get back to my gate. I have to go through this to meet with a man so disrespectful of a commitment made and of my time that he cannot organize his life to arrive at a meeting on time in his own home city. If he could not be relied on to honor such an easy commitment, why should anybody believe he would honor more important ones?

Still, violating my own rule, I went ahead and accepted this guy as a client. It was predictably ugly. He lied, he cheated, and he was completely disorganized, dysfunctional, and unreasonable. He sucked up a pretty good chunk of my time, and it cost me thousands of dollars to get rid of him.

Now, here's a "success secret" for you: I'm not the only person to have figured out this punctuality-integrity link. I'm just not that smart. I've stumbled on something that a whole lot of other smart, successful, and influential people already know and secretly use to make their determinations about who they will buy from or not buy from, do business with or not do business with, help or not help, trust or distrust. If you are not a punctual person, others you wish to positively influence negatively judge you.

If you think that successful people—people you want to deal with—do not have their own little "systems" for judging people, you're very naïve. Not only do they have such a system, most successful people make a point of having "instant reject criteria," to save time in determining who they want to deal with and who they don't.

One of my earliest business mentors said that there were only two good reasons for being late for a meeting with him: one, you're dead; two, you want to be.

To borrow from Dale Carnegie, if you want to win friends and influence people, be punctual. And, if you'd like to save yourself a lot of time and trouble, start using this as a means of judging those who would do business with you.

So take heed, entrepreneurs, executives and business leaders of all varieties. Being on time counts, and it counts HUGE.

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