

## Life comes at you fast, So Slow Down and Reflect!

The theme for my church's sermons for the current series is, "Life comes at you fast." Life and business does come at us fast. I sometimes bore my college students by regaling them with tales of how, when I graduated from college, we did not have personal computers, PDA's, instant messaging, email, voice mail or text messaging. Life does come at us faster than it ever has before and, if the trend continues; it will come at us even faster in the years to come. What can we do to try to control our lives and our businesses? **We can stop, slow down, and reflect.**

My mother, who was born before the Great Depression, was upset with me because she asked me what I did when I worked for one of my former employers. I told her that they paid me to think. I could just hear the disappointment in her voice over the telephone. I know she was thinking that her son was a snob who did not use his hands to make a living. In today's business, however, you **need** to take time out to think in order to survive the barrage of information which assaults us everyday.

My mother was a great woman who had a great heart. I say was a great woman because she passed away over nine years ago. My mother was from the "Old School." Work was sweat, dirt, and tangible product. But, people and work have changed! In this 21<sup>st</sup> century "Age of Technology" that we live in, we must take time to assess, evaluate, and integrate the mass of information that we face, especially those of us who own a business. We cannot afford to make mistakes with our time, money and other resources. We need to stop, slow down, and reflect because, "Life comes at us fast!"

Take at least 15 minutes a day Monday through Thursday, and 30 minutes to 2 hours on Fridays to think about your business, where it is at, where do you want to go, and how you want to get there. **Work on** your business instead of **in** it!

The above mentioned time is a **starting point**. I ask my clients to spend an average of 3 hours a week in this kind of reflection and then I give them the tools to make it happen. My clients that utilize the reflection time and focus on the highly suggested activities absolutely grow and become more profitable.

I know what a lot of you are thinking, "Michael, I do not have three hours or even 15 minutes a day to think. I need to do things to make money." Wrong!! People don't plan to fail, they fail to plan, and planning involves reflection and assessment. Trust me, you will find ways to make up for the time that you have invested in growing your business by think about your business.

One of my clients takes off every Friday to work on the business, a practice to which he credits much of his business success. In fact, he wants me to advocate my clients taking off 8 hours a week. I know many of you are not there yet; if so, I would suggest starting off by taking the 15 minutes a day for reflection and working up to 8 hours a week.

What does “Working On” the business mean? Let’s start by stating what it does not mean, at least to me.

“Working On” the business does not mean:

- Making a “to do list.”
- Serving clients
- Answering Employees questions
- Returning emails or voice mails

“Working On” the business means figuring out the mission, vision, and direction of the company and determining how you are going to get there and what it will take. Then make the plan to do it, by stopping your frantic pace and regularly taking time for reflection.

You need to do the reflecting time outside of the office, because once you get to the office it is difficult not to be interrupted by clients, employees and all of the other toys we have in our business to make our life easier. I am not advocating spending four dollars on a cup of coffee, but you need to spend your thinking or reflecting time outside of your office, at a place such as a Barnes & Nobles or a coffee shop! If you get lonely, you could bring your laptop with you to Starbucks or any one of the other places that has made it too convenient for all of us to access the Internet. Bring the laptop to take notes and write out your ideas. Do not be tempted to access your email. You need to cherish this time of reflection, to think of ways to grow and develop your business. I know how easy it is to spend this time creating a to do list for the day, remaining mired in what exists now instead of imagining what could be. Fight the urge; let your imagine soar outside of your current reality.

Take care and remember that life comes at you fast, so stop, slow down and reflect.

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