

LESSONS LEARNED

FROM 20 YEARS
OF COACHING

MARC A. CORSINI

DO WHAT YOU DO BETTER

LESSONS LEARNED

FROM 20 YEARS
OF COACHING

Lessons Learned from 20 Years of Coaching

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Do What You Do Better for Salespeople

acknowledgements

This book is dedicated to all the people I've coached over the past 20 years. While I was helping you do what you do better, you helped me do what I do better, too.

Every day for two decades, my office has seemed more like a research lab where salespeople, professionals and executives have discovered new and better ways to work and live their lives outside of work. My clients and I have laughed together, and we've occasionally cried together. A great many have overachieved beyond what they ever thought possible. And along the way, we've all developed and grown into better businesspeople—and, I believe, better people in general. I cannot begin to say how fulfilling it has been to be a part of these journeys.

I thank God every day for the extraordinary opportunity to work with so many great clients.

I'd like to extend a special thanks to Susan Swagler, my editor. For more than 15 years, she has taken my ideas, strategies and philosophies and worked magic to put them into words. She gave me confidence on content and technique when I was scared and struggling to become a writer. Those first five years on my own were challenging, and when Susan came into my life I learned the positive power of collaboration. When I was uncomfortable, she was my safety net, my coach and my strategist. I learned that sometimes we all need someone to help us be our best.

Finally, it is my sincere wish that you will find this book useful and inspiring. I hope that it will help you, in whatever way necessary, do what you do better.

Marc Corsini
November 2011

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Lessons Learned from 20 Years of Coaching

People ask me regularly what are the biggest, most important lessons I've learned in twenty years of coaching.

It's a great question ... with a lot of answers.

I'm honored, and I've been blessed, to coach some of the best and brightest people at companies large and small all over the Southeastern United States. Every day offers another new learning opportunity—for those I coach and for me, too. Sometimes it feels like my offices are a kind of research lab studying performance, productivity, selling, leadership and the art of doing what you do better (whatever you might do).

Twenty years ago, I found myself out of work because the entrepreneurial company I was working for ran out of cash and closed. That's when I learned the real meaning of "business." You have to have business to stay in business.

It was then that I decided to start relying on my own business skills. I founded my own sales-management consulting firm.

This took a leap of faith—and a healthy measure of belief in myself.

I was relatively new in town—having only been in Birmingham for about a year. I had never worked as a consultant, and I had no immediate, go-to market. But I'd always been told that if you love what you do, you'll never "work" another day in your life. The thing is, I loved the sales process (in fact, I enjoyed



As I have coached others to success, they have taught me a few things, too.



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everything involved in selling). I was good at it, and I believed that I had the ability to share my skills with others.

And so, twenty years later, here we are. As I have coached others to success, they have taught me a few things, too.

This little booklet contains some of the most valuable lessons I've learned while coaching thousands of successful executives, professionals and salespeople. My hope is that, in reading this, you'll realize your own dreams and find fulfillment—in your offices and in the wider world.

I coach these same ideas and concepts every day. They are the most valuable, usable lessons I've learned over the years. They will help you **do what you do better—whatever you do.**

1

Be Resilient, Focused and Self-Motivated

"The greatest of work is inside man."

— Pope John Paul II

Since I started my coaching business in the early 1990s, I feel like I've learned and experienced a lifetime of business coaching know-how as I've helped my clients do what they do better.

I know that my whole-life approach to coaching has made a whole lot of difference to many, many people. I've had the privilege of coaching hundreds of people who have achieved incredible success both in and out of their offices; unfortunately, I've also known a few who didn't cross the finish line. However, there are lessons to be learned from that, too.

Over the years, I've noticed that people who overachieve at something significant in their work (and life in general) face the same amount of distracting "stuff" as those who don't achieve success.

Winners make progress in spite of the "stuff."

Everyone has setbacks, daily distractions, problems, losses, issues, etc. But some people make regular progress in spite of this stuff. They might very well have to deal with sick children, aging parents, car troubles, technology problems, employee issues, employer challenges, dissatisfied clients, challenging marriages, health issues and all the other things that life throws at us. The only difference? **Successful people don't let distractions get them down or stand in the way of their progress.**

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Successful people don't let distractions get them down or stand in the way of their progress.

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So why is that? How can some people prosper when others just labor or, worse yet, get bogged down and give in?

First, **I believe that most successful people are resilient.** They rebound quickly. They can lose a very large client one week, perhaps sulk for a day or even a week, and then get back up and back in the game quickly and with a renewed vigor.

Secondly, **I think that successful people focus on the prize, not the obstacles.** They keep their sights on what they ultimately want to achieve. Obstacles don't distract them from this vision, and they certainly don't stop them from making progress.

And finally, **the truly successful people I know are self-motivated.** They possess an inherent drive to be successful, and they are constantly looking for a new and better technique, tool or idea to help them do what they do better. That's not to say they don't appreciate coaching. On the contrary. Regular coaching sessions are a way to get (and stay) motivated and focused and resilient.

CORSINI'S POINT

Work at being resilient, stay focused and create your own motivation. People who overachieve at something significant in their work and life have the same amount of baggage and distractions as those who don't achieve success. The successful ones make progress in spite of the "stuff." They aren't necessarily more educated, luckier, physically stronger or more gifted; they are more determined. When they encounter setbacks, they are resilient. They focus on the prize, not the obstacles. And, finally, they don't rely on others to pave their way; they are self-motivated.

2

Persevere

"When you come to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on."

— Franklin D. Roosevelt

I'm often asked to name one important key to success at work and for life in general. That's tough! A client of mine once answered this by saying, *"The No. 1 key to success is focusing on doing the 100 things you need to do to be successful."* That's thought-provoking and maybe a bit overwhelming. I'll narrow the advice a little and say **my top two keys to success are perseverance and discipline.**

Right now, I'll **focus the discussion even more and say perseverance is my No. 1 key to success.**

While it might not be as readily appealing as other virtues such as wisdom, knowledge or justice, **perseverance is the virtue that can get you through hard times—something as endemic as an economic downturn or as personal as an ailing parent.** Perseverance involves taking action in spite of setbacks, discouragement, screw-ups, obstacles, employee issues, etc. People who persevere might very well encounter examples of "Murphy's Law" (if something can go wrong, it will), but they simply shrug and then soldier on.

I received early lessons in perseverance when I was growing up; my dad taught them to me. In fact, the power of perseverance was among the most important things he passed along. For years, my father has had his own architectural firm in Macon,

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that can get
you through
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Ga. His career has been a success, and one of the biggest reasons for this was that he could not be outworked.

He experienced tough times when the firm didn't have enough work, but he would not be outworked. He went in early, stayed late and worked every weekend.

He never gave up—especially during hard times. He has always persevered.

I thought of all this recently when I reread a great story about Winston Churchill. It went like this:

In 1940, at the height of the Battle of Britain when Nazi firepower seemed overwhelming, Winston Churchill reminded Britons that surrender was not an option. "Never give in," he told a group of schoolchildren. "Never give in. Never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in, except to convictions of honor and good sense."

And so I remind you—to persevere. Stay in the game. Make the tough calls. Complete the hard projects. Have the difficult employee conversations. Be a leader. **Do what you need to do to do what you do better.**

CORSINI'S POINT

Embrace the virtue of perseverance. It's your friend—especially during tough times. It's the answer when Murphy comes knocking at your door. Don't waste your time dwelling on the bad news of the day. Use your time and energy wisely to persevere. Don't ever stop moving forward in pursuit of your dreams; in fact, go the extra mile. Persevere, and you'll eventually prosper. Just ask my 88-year-old dad who went through hard times and came out on the other side better for the experience. He'll share a lesson or two about perseverance with you—just like he modeled for me all the time when I was growing up.

3

Be Disciplined

"With self-discipline most anything is possible..."

— Theodore Roosevelt

In the last chapter, I listed perseverance as my No. 1 key to success. **While persevering and continuing to make progress in challenging times is important, it simply won't happen without discipline.** The two go hand-in-hand. When "Murphy and his Law" move into your office, you won't get him to leave without discipline.

So let's talk about the art of being disciplined. Because sometimes it is an art—especially when being disciplined takes so much effort that doing it, and living your life at the same time, becomes a kind of balancing act. **Discipline calls for hard work, focus and consistency—in good times and bad.** It's about making progress when nobody is looking on admiringly. It's keeping on when times are tough and rewards are not immediate.

One of the most meaningful quotes I've ever heard came from an audio series I listened to years ago. I've used the concept in hundreds of my coaching sessions. Jim Rohn, a motivational guru, said it, and it goes like this:

"We all suffer from the pain of discipline or the pain of regret."

It's true; discipline can be painful. In some ways, it's a grind. Also, it's usually not very exciting.

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and bad.

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Often, it's something you do day-in-and-day-out—without an immediate payoff.

Discipline is saving \$250 every month, year after year, when you're dying for the latest smart phone, another suit, a new car, etc. It's about delaying immediate gratification now for a payoff later. Discipline is reading to your young children every night—even when you're exhausted. It's finding five minutes to do a daily devotional. It's taking a few moments regularly to call and check on your child at college or your elderly parents even when you have 15 other things that need your immediate attention.

And sometimes discipline is about what you *don't* do.

This “don't do” concept is what comes into play when you make the decision to complete one more task on an important project when you'd rather just go home like everyone else in the office. It's walking past the sausage, ham and cheese-eggs at the Shoney's buffet on any given Saturday and making your low-fat, healthy selection at the fruit bar. It's getting up at 4:50 a.m. for your early-morning walk instead of turning off the alarm clock and rolling over for a few more minutes of sleep.

So which would you choose? The immediate pain of discipline and the resulting fruits of your efforts? Or the lasting pain of regret for all you didn't accomplish?

CORSINI'S POINT

Master the art of discipline. Discipline is a friend, but it's one that demands your attention. We can either suffer from the pain of discipline or the pain of regret. The day-to-day difficulties of discipline lead to rewards, positive energy and a life of abundance. The pain of regret gets you nothing but loss, negative energy, and a life of scarcity and dissatisfaction. I challenge you to use discipline as a tool to make your goals a reality both in and out of the office. It's difficult being disciplined, but the rewards are great—just not always immediate. Discipline is absolutely key to doing what you do better.

4

Specialize

"Often, he who does too much does too little."

— Italian proverb

I learned this next lesson myself the hard way about 15 years ago. It is simply this: **Specialize.**

When you become a specialist, you are offering something that is exclusively yours. And that makes you uniquely helpful to your clients. Make it your goal to be "the expert" in your field. Become the "thought leader" in your business. Bring this to the table, and you'll give your clients more than they expect.

For the first five years of my consulting business, I wanted as many opportunities as possible. I dreaded the very thought of missing out on any opportunity!

To make sure that never happened, I had all my sales and marketing materials include anything and everything I could think of that might impact any and all types of business consulting. You name it, I offered it.

Then came the day I'll never forget.

I called the CEO of a local company in Birmingham because I was developing a niche working with salespeople in his industry. I left him a voice mail with my best elevator pitch, and he subsequently left me a voice mail asking me to send him something. I did, and I listed the 20 or so services I offered. When I finally got him on the phone, I immediately started in on the success I was having helping another company increase

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*People naturally want the best.
They want to be able to rely on the go-to person.
Be that person!*

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their sales. But before I could get very far, he said: *"It looks like you do a little bit of everything."*

"Yes I do," I replied proudly.

"Well," he said, *"it looks like you try to do everything, and you specialize in nothing. I'm looking for a specialist to help us increase sales—not someone who is trying to be all things to all people."*

That hurt. But he was right. And it seemed that my "be-all-things-to-all-people" strategy had backfired. His candor stung, but, fortunately for me, I didn't let it get me down. Instead, I took his message to heart and changed my strategy.

I decided then and there to concentrate on what I did best. **I vowed to be the very best I could be in my own area of expertise.**

Today I coach other people to be the specialists in their industries. **People naturally want the best. They want to be able to rely on the go-to person. Be that person!** Specialize, and the business will come to you. Have the confidence to tell people what you do very well. **Specialize.**

CORSINI'S POINT

Be a specialist. Figure out what you do better than anyone else, and do that thing. Specialize your services. Years ago, I decided to specialize. It was the smartest thing I could have done. Today, CCG specializes in executive, professional and sales coaching. That's our focus. That's what we do best. We get other opportunities outside our area of expertise, and, yes, we take advantage of what comes our way. But we don't dilute our brand. Be the best at something—do that something better than anyone else.

5

Authenticity in All Things

"A half-truth is a whole lie."

— Yiddish proverb

I've learned there is absolutely no substitute for being authentic with people. In other words: Tell the truth. Be straight with people. Don't beat around the bush. Make honesty your *only* policy.

Let me be authentic here about myself for a moment; I'll bet some of you will personally relate to this. I wanna be liked by people. I have a desire to please others and, at the same time, I seek to avoid uncomfortable situations. Mike, my brother, always laughed at me when I used to say, *"I like people who like me."*

Early in my career, as a salesperson, that mentality worked well for me. I wanted to please my clients, and I'd work very hard to meet or exceed their expectations. I wanted others' approval, and I got it when I did my job right.

This mindset worked against me later when I was a sales manager. I dreaded the annual evaluations I had to do with our employees (whom I really wanted to like me). Of course, in those evaluations, I had to tell them what, and how, they needed to improve. As you might imagine, from time to time, this resulted in a little conflict. (The second mistake I made then was not giving them on-going feedback and coaching.)

When I became a consultant, I did so knowing it was my job to evaluate people and then give them honest feedback on what they needed to do in order to do what they do better.

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I learned to always give people the truth—good and bad. No more hedging.

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With my inherent desire to be liked, I often struggled with how honest to be with people.

Then, in 1997, I met Bruce Denson, Sr., CEO of a risk management and benefits firm called Cobbs, Allen & Hall, Inc., in Birmingham. Bruce hired me to coach all of his salespeople. Quarterly, I'd meet with him, company president Grantland Rice III and a salesperson. We'd give feedback—positive and negative—on the salesperson's performance. In those meetings, I'd watch Bruce as he gave straightforward, direct, necessary and constructive guidance. Thinking back, it was a little like watching former *American Idol* host Simon Cowell—but not as cutting and sarcastic. Bruce's employees might not have liked his message, but they knew it was the truth. We didn't have “pre-meetings” to talk about how we were going to give feedback to a person. No need to—there was no filter on Bruce's message.

Bruce's candor was refreshing. The message wasn't mean, just straightforward. It was in those sessions that I changed the way I coached. **I learned to always give people the truth—good and bad.** No more hedging. **I fought through my desire to be liked, and I found that because of my authenticity, my relationships are better.** People know where they stand with me, and they respect me for that. This kind of respect endures. I realized that recently when two different people, whom I used to coach, called me to get my opinion on big decisions they faced.

Both said, “*I know you'll tell me the truth.*”

CORSINI'S POINT

Be authentic. Tell people the truth. Yes, it is difficult—especially if you want to be liked and you dislike confrontation. Believe me, I know. People won't always like your message, but they'll appreciate you in the long run for the simple and important fact that you will always be authentic with them.

6

Prioritize

“Consider all the accounts in your life: Are you making regular deposits in each of them?”

— Marc Corsini

One of the many perks of coaching overachieving businesspeople for the past two decades is that they tell me about a lot of great stuff. Books, strategies, technology, trends, techniques, etc. You name it, these go-getters know about it, and I often hear about it in our coaching sessions.

Several years ago, Robert Berman, who is a good friend and client, told me about ***The Story of the Five Balls***. This little gem of a tale is included in James Patterson's moving book, *Suzanne's Diary for Nicholas*. It's all about priorities.

Patterson invites readers to imagine that life is a game, and in this game you are juggling five balls. The balls are **work, family, health, friends** and **integrity**, and you are trying to keep them all in the air. Then one day it occurs to you that the balls are not all the same. **Work is a rubber ball and if you drop it, it will bounce back. The other balls—family, health, friends and integrity—are made of glass and are far more fragile.** If you drop one of these, there will be consequences. You surely will damage it; you might even shatter it. Understanding how to juggle these balls is key to creating balance in your life.

This simple idea is a humbling thing to consider. Think about all the attention—not to mention time, talents and treasures—

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True success is success in all areas of life. Certainly work is crucial, but it shouldn't be the most important aspect of your life.

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we devote to keeping the work ball in play. Some people are doing everything possible to keep juggling that work ball.

This isn't balance. Far from it, in fact.

Spending all (or even most) of your energy on the work ball means neglecting the other balls that are so fragile, and irreplaceable, in our lives.

This is the same idea I encourage with my **7 F's of True Success** model of a balanced approach to work and life. **True success is success in all areas of life. Certainly work is crucial, but it shouldn't be the most important aspect of your life.**

Of course, like all of you, I do have a work ball; I call it my **Fundamentals** of work. But juggling just this one—making it the focus of my life—isn't my idea of success. Nor should it be yours.

A healthy, whole-life approach to true, all-encompassing success includes these other balls, too: **Family** (and friends), **Finances** (and your financial legacy), **Faith, Fitness, Fun** and the **Fusion** of all these things. That's what I coach and encourage, and that's what I strive to live each and every day.

Life is precious—enjoy the journey. And understand your priorities along the way.

CORSINI'S POINT

The lesson of the five balls is a wonderful one. The gist of it is this: **Prioritize**. Making work your main focus results in a shallow victory in the long run. Warren Buffett once said, *"When you get to my age, you'll measure your success in life by how many of the people you want to have love you actually do love you. That's the ultimate test of how you've lived your life."* Indeed, the secret to a joyful life is balance. True success is about achieving success in *all* areas of your life. That takes focus and hard work. It requires you to **do what you do better** both in and out of the office. You can't do that unless you understand life's priorities. And finally, I also encourage you to focus on your blessings, and be grateful for them.

DO WHAT YOU DO BETTER

7

Success is Not Final; Failure is Not Fatal

"Courage can't see around corners but goes around them anyway."

— **Mignon McLaughlin**

Whatever you do each day in your offices and outside of them, you absolutely must keep in mind the big picture. With the big picture in mind, you'll not only be more focused on your goals, you'll be less likely to get distracted on your way to achieving them.

Decades ago, Winston Churchill said: *"Success is not final, failure is not fatal; it is the courage to continue that counts."*

Let's break that great quote down and apply it to your life and what you do each day. This is how I use this wisdom in coaching my clients to do what they do better:

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What seems
insurmountable
today is simply
not so —
it just feels
that way.

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Success is not final. I've seen people begin their careers virtually at the top of their game, earning the equivalent of "rookie of the year" in what they do. They receive praise; accolades; and, in many cases, tons of respect from others. But none of us can afford to rest on our laurels! Unless you keep up the effort, over time, people forget. You can't keep relying on something earned two, five or 10 years ago. Ultimately, people are judged to be "successful" for what they have achieved in the past; what they are achieving right now; and, even, what their future looks like.

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Failure is not fatal. I've coached people who have encountered all types of failures large and small. One lost a client that represented 70 percent of their business; I've had clients lose their businesses altogether when the bank called the note. I've seen marriages fail, children die too young, drug addictions, suicide threats—you name it, I've seen it. And what I've learned from all those tragedies is that life gives most of us another day.

What seems insurmountable today is simply not so—it just feels that way. I find that extremely encouraging; I hope you do, too.

It is the courage to continue that counts. It takes fear to be courageous. I believe that courage is not the absence of fear, but, perhaps, the result of a big ol' case of fear. It's being faced with life's biggest challenges and then fighting the urge to freeze, to retreat, to give up. It's continuing the fight—even in the face of great odds. It's persevering in life's storm until the brighter day comes. That brighter day will come—we just have to be patient and courageous.

CORSINI'S POINT

Winston Churchill was spot on when he said, ***“Success is not final, failure is not fatal; it is the courage to continue that counts.”*** My 20 years of coaching experience has taught me that you play the game of work and life every day. If you're keeping score, most days you either win or lose; sometimes it's a tie. Every so often, you'll have a great big success or a big ol' whopper of a setback. It happens. Whatever the case, it's not the end game; it's just part of the game. When faced with an opportunity or a challenge, I challenge you to approach it head-on and with a positive mindset. That's how you **do what you do better** throughout your life.

8

Overcoming Defeat

“What is defeat? Nothing but education; nothing but the first step to something better.”

— Wendell Phillips

During the past 20 years of helping others do what they do better, I've learned so much about taking dreams and goals and making them into valuable realities—both in and out of the office.

Realizing dreams and goals, unfortunately, goes hand-in-hand with the occasional defeat. One of the hardest things I've learned involves overcoming defeat and turning a loss (of either an existing client or a potential new opportunity) into a positive, learning and growing experience.

I've always said that in business we only “rent” our clients. Sometimes this rental agreement spans decades; other times it's only a few weeks. Here's the hard truth: **It's not a matter of if you lose a valuable client; it's only a matter of when.** How you handle the disappointment of a loss can have long-term consequences.

Accept losses and reversals with grace, and you're more likely to eventually realize a positive outcome. Sulking and challenging the decision is not just bad form; it might cost you future opportunities.

This is how to handle losing a client:

- **Do nothing for at least two business days.** Calm down. Losing a valued client is painful emotionally and, often, financially. Give yourself time to think clearly and rationally.

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- Next, **send a personal, handwritten thank-you note.** Sincerely thank the client for allowing you the opportunity to work with them. Or, if this was a prospective client, thank them for considering your proposal. End by letting them know how much they (and their business) meant to you. Say you'll look forward to talking with them soon.
- Three months later, **schedule a lunch with this former customer or prospective client.** Make this encounter light and casual, but do include in the conversation something new, exciting or beneficial to this person. I believe you should always add some type of value whenever you meet with someone—no matter what the circumstances.
- Six months out, **send the former client a little something they would enjoy.** This action shows that you actually listened when the client shared something personal. It shows that you cared when they were a client and that you continue to care now.

Some people I work with say the loss “stings” too much, and they just can’t (or don’t want to) send a note or make contact. Their pride gets in the way. I challenge these people to put their emotions aside and just do it. Maintaining relationships sometimes requires doing things you might not want to do.

CORSINI’S POINT

Overcome the occasional defeat with self-control and dignity. When you lose a valued client or a significant new opportunity, restrain from a knee-jerk reaction to “set the record straight.” Follow up soon after the loss with a thank-you note. Have lunch with the former client in three months. Look for ways to show you value the client—not just the transaction. By staying in the game, you significantly improve your chances of “renting” the client again. Handle disappointment with grace and thoughtful action, and instead of simply hearing, “*You’re fired,*” you could very well hear, “*You’re re-hired!*” in the future.

9

Give Feedback

"Feedback is the breakfast of champions."

— Ken Blanchard

Sometimes the coaching advice I offer is a one-size-fits-all idea. It applies to executives and their employees, managers and those they manage. Basically, it covers everyone in business! This is one such lesson, and it has to do with effective communications.

Give regular feedback on performance, and talk about the little things that bother you (while they still are little and relatively insignificant).

Doing so helps avoid a ton of problems.

Here's a typical example: Let's say you have an employee who is late to a meeting one day. It's inappropriate and inconsiderate, but it's only a slight irritation. Not having time to address this with a "coaching moment," you let it go. Then it happens again in a couple of days, but you still don't say anything. The next week, same story.

A month goes by, and the employee is late more often than not. By now, you're not only noticing it and becoming more annoyed each time, you've also started to complain about it to other managers, and maybe even your spouse. Finally, you decide you've had it, and you resolve to address the situation next time it happens. Sure enough, three days later, this employee shows up late to an important meeting. You ask to see the person in your office afterward, and (because you have been stewing on the problem) you have a highly

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Talk about the little things that bother you (while they still are little and relatively insignificant).

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emotional, negative-energy-filled conversation. The employee might have no idea that the “transgression” was causing so much frustration. They probably will be confused as to why you are so red-faced and over-the-top about the subject. By the end of the conversation, nobody is happy. In fact, you might not even really end the discussion so much as you just cut it off. The tension, though, will remain.

I've seen minor annoyances—talking too loudly on the phone, smacking gum, always needing to be right—lead to real resentment and anger between co-workers. Often, simply addressing the problem early would have diffused the situation—or helped to avoid it altogether.

I address performance in every coaching session I have with someone. I've learned from hands-on experience that the more you discuss performance and work habits (good and bad), the easier it is to do. I think managers should talk about people's performance every day—not just once a year when a performance review is due and certainly not only when there's a negative issue to address. Likewise, co-workers should talk to each other about things that bother them.

In all cases, **communicating at the first sign of a problem is far better and much smarter than avoiding the issue.** For you and for your co-workers—and even for the entire office.

CORSINI'S POINT

Communicate effectively and often. This lesson is all about communicating. And since we all have to communicate in the course of a business day, it applies to each of us—regardless of what we do. Give regular feedback on performance, and talk about the little things that bother you before they morph into bigger problems. I've learned that people want feedback on how they are doing. They mostly want positive feedback, of course, but if you pair criticism with constructive, candid feedback (not being mean or hard) and you back it up with examples or observations, they'll appreciate that, too—even if the message is uncomfortable.

10

Assess Your Business Model

“Your success in life isn't based on your ability to simply change. It is based on your ability to change faster than your competition, customers and business.”

— Mark Sanborn

I have an important question for you: **Does your current business model work?**

The question I just posed is one that few businesspeople take time to ask themselves. Some don't even think to ask it at all—until it's clear that their current model isn't working. By then, it's usually too late. The idea is coming up more and more often in my coaching sessions. I think that's because market conditions change so quickly these days, and strategic-thinking businesspeople realize they need to change to keep up. Also, I think we sometimes get caught unaware by what I call **“The Edger Principle.”** (Yes, I'm talking about the lawn tool.)



Ask yourself periodically:
‘Is my current way of doing business effective, or is it out of date?’



As a boy growing up in Macon, Ga., I loved doing yard work. I found much joy and satisfaction in the pretty immediate gratification of taking a yard that needed grooming and, just a few hours later, making that yard look great. As an adult, I still enjoy working in the yard. It's therapeutic for me to sweat a little and make something other than office work look good.

A few years ago, I had to give up my yard work temporarily because of a foot injury. A neighbor's son took over, but I got right back out there as soon as possible.

LESSONS LEARNED

FROM 20 YEARS OF COACHING

Once back, I cranked up my gas edger and adjusted the blade to the usual sweet spot. I started my perfect line next to the driveway, but nothing happened. My edger didn't even pierce the grass. I lowered the blade a bit and tried again. It barely scratched the ground.

I got another blade from the basement, and I was amazed to see that the old blade was 3½ inches shorter than the new one.

So what's the point? What's "The Edger Principle"?

While I was sidelined, our neighbor's son had used the edger month after month, and he ever so slowly was shaving inches off the blade. The blade was shrinking at such a slow pace, he was unable to detect that it had become useless. **It took a fresh pair of eyes—and a new perspective—to realize the edger didn't work anymore.**

I had a client start to question whether or not their business model was still working. They started their company 25 years ago and had been wildly successful using the original business model—until the past couple of years. My client could feel the market changing, and they're modifying now. They have to. They also were lucky in recognizing a problem fairly early. They realized "The Edger Principle" at work.

You have to ask yourself periodically: "Is my current way of doing business effective, or is it out of date?" It might take an independent, outside perspective to help answer the question.

CORSINI'S POINT

Assess your business model. Do this regularly. In business and in life, we all suffer at some point from "The Edger Principle." I suggest a periodic evaluation of what you are doing in order to determine what you need to do more of, less of or stop doing altogether. Sometimes you're simply too close to the problem. Get an outside perspective; it can be a coach, mentor or whomever—as long as the person can offer an independent and neutral viewpoint. Addressing "The Edger Principle" today will help you **do what you do better** tomorrow.

11

Minding the Mind Games

"Your chances of success in any undertaking can always be measured by your belief in yourself."

— Robert Collier

Maybe the most important thing I've learned over the past twenty years is this: **How well you perform depends largely on what happens between your own two ears.** The most important ingredient in the work you do is your mind (and, of course, your mindset).

So many of the lessons I've shared focus on where you are mentally. **Overachievers truly believe they can accomplish what they're striving toward.** Yes, they might have doubts from time to time, but deep down, they *know* they can do it.

They also resist engaging in distracting mind games—even when it's their own mind playing the tricks.

When it comes to mind games, you have a choice. You can give in and give yourself permission to stop short of your goals, or you can refuse to play that game and press on until you achieve what you set out to achieve.

I think we all begin our careers (indeed, even our very lives) with the desire to be something special and to do something significant. Just ask any young child what he or she wants to do when they grow up, and you'll get clear, confident and ambitious answers. Ask a group of college seniors what they plan to accomplish in life, and they'll give answers full of promise and promises.

“

Overachievers
truly believe
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”

LESSONS LEARNED

FROM 20 YEARS OF COACHING

Often it's only after people experience failures, challenges and setbacks that they quit dreaming about what they could do with their lives. These same people could use these disappointments to strengthen their resolve to achieve.

I remember marveling that Dr. Luis Cabrera, my dentist and friend, worked just four days a week and took every Friday off. I often said to myself, *"I wish I could take off Fridays."* But then I'd think of all the reasons why I couldn't. One day, exhausted after five full days of coaching, I said, *"I'm going to figure out a way to coach only four days a week."* It took time and a few lifestyle changes, but for years now I've worked a four-day work week. I spend Fridays with my family, my faith and the other 7 F's of life that I talk about in my other books.

At some point, we all find ourselves replaying conversations or scenes that distract us or discourage us from our goals in life. Maybe someone once said that you didn't measure up. Maybe you dwell on shortcomings (real or imagined). Perhaps you revisit past mistakes. These are mind games, and they are terminal to the goals you set. **But here's the thing about mind games: You can simply refuse to play!**

I wrote earlier in this booklet that everyone in life experiences setbacks. It's just that some people don't let those setbacks stop them from moving forward. They have faith in their abilities. And they don't play mind games against themselves.

CORSINI'S POINT

This lesson is about believing in yourself and being confident enough to overcome mind games. It's about being uncomfortable and then challenging yourself to prevail over obstacles. It's about knowing that you can (and will) achieve significance both in and out of the office. You can accomplish so much if you will just give yourself permission to be successful and then believe in your own abilities to achieve your success. Spend more time thinking about the ways you can achieve something rather than cataloging the reasons you can't. Do this, and you'll **do what you do better.**

about the author

Marc Corsini is president of Corsini Consulting Group, LLC, a business & sales coaching and strategic planning firm based in Birmingham, AL.

For the past 20 years, Marc has worked with thousands of salespeople, professionals and executives throughout the Southeast helping them do what they do better.

LESSONS LEARNED

20 YEARS OF COACHING

thousands of executives, professionals and salespeople yields countless learning opportunities—for those being coached and for the coach.

Here are the most important and work-ready ideas Marc Corsini uses each and every day in his popular programs. From persevering to prioritizing, from being disciplined to overcoming defeat, Marc guides readers to realize their own success. And with the all-encompassing bigger picture of a balanced life well lived always in mind, he encourages readers to embrace the absolute importance of authenticity in all that they do.

These are the most valuable (and practical) lessons Marc has coached—and learned—over the years. As with most things Marc does, these lessons are offered in a spirit of encouragement. They are meant to motivate.

Read them, enjoy them and put them to work for you. While many of these concepts reference business, most apply to life outside the office, too. And all will definitely help you do what you do better.

DO WHAT YOU DO BETTER

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