

Ed's "Five Keys To Success"

First, thanks to the many of you who told me during my recent road trip to Lyon, Austin GDC, the Tokyo Game Show, and the London Licensing show that you really enjoy this e-newsletter.

We appreciate that and will do our best to continue to provide you with content that is relevant and engaging. In return, we'd love you to forward this to your friends in the business so they can opt in as well ... and also to give our clients the opportunity to compete for your work. 'Nuff said on that, as Stan Lee would say.

I recently read a business book called "The Obvious," and I highly recommend it. It reiterated many things we all know intellectually and with which we would agree whenever we hear them. But it did so in a way that made it clear how few people actually practice these truths. That was my inspiration for this month's column, where I intend to share some specific lessons that I teach all my new clients regarding success in our business. They are lessons that should also be obvious but they, too, are frequently overlooked. I call them the Five Keys To Success. They are:

Talent. If an individual or a studio doesn't have the necessary talent for the job, they will lose out to those who do. Simple, right? But how many people try to do things for which they are not suited in the interest of cash flow? In the long run, you and your reputation suffer, so you lose more than you gain by doing it.

Relationship. If I walk up to you on the street and you don't know me from Adam, and I ask you for money -- even one dollar -- are you likely to give it to me? I don't think so. Only guilt, pity, or charity would lead you to do so, and those aren't characteristics on which business decisions are made. Why then do developers expect to be able to walk up and ask for hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars without a relationship and expect to get it? People sell to and buy from their friends first and so, if you aren't investing in relationships more than you are in your products, you are missing the point.

Work ethic. If you put two studios or individuals side by side that are equally talented and both have relationships with the buyer, the one with the better work ethic will prevail, hands down, every time.

Attitude. If a publisher is working with two different developers they know, each of which is talented with a great work ethic, on-time delivery, and so forth, but one of them is pleasant and collaborative and the other one is difficult or adversarial in their dealings, who do you think is going to get the lifeblood of repeat business?

Reputation. This last key is the "ring that binds them all." Your reputation is your brand identity and the asset you must manage more closely than any other in this small and incestuous industry. The reputation you have will be the sum of all of the other parts -- talent, relationships, work ethic, and attitude. It is also the sum of these characteristics not just with respect to the leadership of the company but with every person in your company, starting with the receptionist. If you think people are forming opinions about your company based only on your interface with them, Mr. CEO, Team Leader, Producer, or Managing Director, you are also missing the success you could be enjoying by instilling this same customer-oriented philosophy in everyone who works for and with you.

Did anyone see the word "price" in my list? That's because it doesn't belong. If you manage these other factors properly, price will **NEVER** be an issue and you will still always be in demand.

Next month, customer service ...

Good hunting!