



I'm Quitting

When to Quit; and When to Not Quit

"You have to give up to go up." -John Maxwell

It was June, 2003 and our family was on a Disney cruise to the Caribbean and southern Mexico. My daughter, Angelica was 9 years old and interested in seeing the Mayan pyramids at Chichen-Itza. It took two hours to get to the ruins by bus once the ship docked. The driver told us we had 30 minutes to climb the pyramid before the tour began. The pyramid is tall; 91 steps with a rope down the middle of the steps for cowards and the infirmed to use to get back down. We began our ascent in the hot Mexican sun. At about step 30 I paused to rest and look around. The view was incredible, but I made the mistake of looking down. I froze where I was. I couldn't move.

You see, I have a death fear of heights. I couldn't go up and I couldn't go down. It took my family several minutes to move me over to the rope and help me down. I sat under a shade tree and watched them climb to the top...without me. I had to give up my goal of climbing to the top. I felt ashamed but I knew that going up any higher was way out of my comfort zone.

In life, we have our individual comfort zones that restrict us from reaching as high as we can. Sometimes we quit because we are scared to go any further. Other times we quit because something is holding us back, physically, mentally or emotionally. Some people just can't deal with success or their fear of failure. Seth Godin says, "Most people quit, they just don't know how to quit successfully." He goes on to say, "Winners quit all the time. They just quit the right stuff at the right time." Here is a way to help you when you feel like quitting.

First, when *SHOULD* you quit to move ahead?

- **Quit when your values are compromised.** In my second year of business I was working with a national corporation. Their training director chose trainers and consultants every year to work with her sales staff. It was an honor to be chosen. After leading two presentations in front of the corporate executives and the leading regional sales managers, I was

invited to display at a trade show. After an hour of demonstrating my sales skills the training director verbally assaulted me “on behalf of her managers” who were angry that a sales trainer was brought in to the show. She also shared this publicly, so I became a source of derision from the jealous managers. She was rude and threatening. The next day she sent a terse email justifying her behavior. I was devastated. After a few months she sent a message inviting me to a meeting to discuss the “next steps” in my involvement with the company. Quoting her earlier message back to her, I said that my business was doing well and I didn’t need business “this bad.” I courteously turned down any future involvement with this organization – and the generous money I would have made. Within a week, I had eight new clients that easily replaced the income of this one. I learned that the universe filled the vacuum created by losing this one client. I learned that no matter how bad you think you need the money, you don’t deserve to be treated like you are worthless. The director in the above story felt she could treat me any way she wanted because either she felt I needed her more than she needed me, or I had such low self-esteem that I would come back for more of her abuse. Neither was the case and my business flourished as a result of clearing this out of my life.

- **Quit when your efforts produce no measurable results.** How long have you been “kicking a dead horse?” I see so many sales people and executives sticking with old programs that don’t produce out of a sense of loyalty to the past or a dead program that once produced and no one knows how to bury it. In my former occupation in the ministry, I saw countless programs and activities that were clung to because of sentimental reasons or someone famous had initiated them (and no one had the guts to say, “Enough is enough!”). When you reach a point that the only reason you are hanging on to an idea or a program is because of the past, it is time to cut the line and let it go. How many professional sports teams keep former stars around hoping they will regain their earlier fame and form? Are you old enough to remember the Ford Edsel? How many corporations keep a product on the shelf because someone has a sentimental attachment to it (certainly NOT the buying public)? By the way, a corollary to this is: Quit when no one but you is paying any attention.
- **Quit doing things that don’t make money or no one benefits from the service.** You will hear at speakers meetings that you should specialize or you look like a “Jack of All Trades and Master of None.” Some speakers can speak across industry lines and shouldn’t limit themselves. Others who can’t are condemning them. I have a speaker-friend named Jim. He is known for his hard-hitting presentations and sales styles within the Auto Sales Industry. Jim was once a top salesman for several dealerships and when he talks auto sales, dealers and car companies listen. He writes a

regular column in Auto Industry magazines on the national and regional level. When he speaks at national and state conventions he is a celebrity. Jim knows that he can teach anyone to excel in sales, but he also knows his niche market is the auto industry. Compare that to another friend I have who speaks in another industry. Last year he decided to expand and move out of that one niche market. It has not worked well because he strayed from his home turf. If you are profiting or your customers are from your area of expertise, then don't quit. But if you aren't seeing positive results across lines, then walk a way while you still can. Don't listen to people who say, "Specialize or die." Listen, rather, to your bottom line and if you can succeed in other areas, go for it.

- **Quit negative relationships.** I learned several years ago that one of the biggest deterrents to success is negative relationships. Nothing will stop you in your tracks like being involved with negative people. I said this to a group last month and one woman asked if this justified leaving her husband...No, but she should work on that relationship to turn it into a positive reinforcement-based one. I am convinced that you should ruthlessly guard against negative people in your life. They will bring you down and you will never recover. Get rid of the nay-sayers. Get rid of the people who don't believe in you. And start with yourself. If you can't support yourself, no one else will want to support or encourage you. Cut all ties with those who hold you back. A friend told me that most people make within 20% of their closest relationships. If you want to move ahead, you have to move into higher level relationships. Get used to being around people who believe in you and support you. Add to their lives with your positive feedback. Form a mind-share group of positive supporters who encourage your dreams and goals.
- **Quit when you reach a dead end.** There is a difference between a speed bump, a detour and a dead end. Winners know how to handle each one. They know how to recognize each one. Speed bumps slow you down (or ruin your alignment when you don't slow down). Detours force you to change direction, but not your final destination or focus. They cause you to take another route. Neither of these force you to abandon your journey. Dead ends stop you cold. The road ends and you have to backtrack, and retrace your steps to get out. Winners know when they are going down a path that leads no where. I got lost one time as a child by taking the wrong path in the woods. My grandparents had to come and take me out (crying and screaming all the way). There is nothing that compares to the feeling of being lost when you thought you were on the right path. As a child I couldn't recognize this but as an adult I know how to turn around before the road leads to nothing. Winners can recognize a dead end by the early results they are getting. They slow down, take a detour and continue heading toward their ultimate goal. Losers only see the short-term signs

and don't see the long-term goal. Quit when you begin to see you are heading into a cul-de-sac.

- **Quit saying “I can’t” and start saying “I can!”** I spoke to a group in North Dakota several months ago. There was a drawing for door prizes and a woman at my table stated that she didn't think she was going to win because. “I never win anything.” Of course you don't, I said. You attract losing with your mindset and your negative thinking. Then you state it for the world and yourself to hear, so you wind up living it out. Self-fulfilling prophesy. We talked some about positive attitudes and affirmations she could employ in her life and two hours later, in another drawing, she won two door prizes. This is not an isolated incident. I saw it happen last month in Idaho. Will it happen to you this fast? I don't know, but I have seen it in action. Why not quit thinking about what you can't do, you can't afford, you can't accomplish and let the universe supply you with everything you need. Real winners know when to quit thinking and speaking negatively and that is what makes them winners. Remember: winners quit all the time. They just know when and what to quit.

So when is the wrong time to quit?

- **We run out of time – and quit.** Time is one of the most valuable commodities we have today. Often, more people will give you their money than their time. More people take Time Management courses to learn how to be more productive on the job and in their lives. Wouldn't you like to feel a sense of accomplishment and leave the office earlier each day? I was leading a Time Mastery presentation for the American Bankers Association last month. Procrastination was a major concern. One of the biggest hindrances to becoming more productive is that we manage time poorly. Most people procrastinate. They put things off until the last minute – and then quit. It is easier to delay or defer decisions and then just give up.
- **We run out of money – and quit.** Many great projects have been abandoned for lack of capital. Most times the money was handled poorly to start with. The inability to manage your finances will hold you back from doing the things you want to do most in life. I was reading in “Lincoln on Leadership”, by Donald Phillips, that in his younger years, Abraham Lincoln partnered with an unscrupulous man to start a general store. The partner couldn't handle the finances properly and Lincoln was left with a hefty debt to repay for many years after the store went under. His dedication to repaying the debt, however helped forge the reputation he had for honesty - hence the nickname: “Honest Abe.” He was well acquainted with defeat in his life but he didn't let it side track him. Had he not repaid that one debt who knows whether or not it would have re-

shaped his future and the political landscape of the United States of America.

- **We get scared - and quit.** I mentor speakers in marketing their careers. I have done some research into the average speaker at the National Speakers Association annual meeting. 40% of the attendees are new to the profession and will never attend another meeting again. They see how tough the requirements to succeed are and they simply give up. I heard Mark LeBlanc, President of the NSA tell a group I Atlanta recently that there were one thousand times in his career that he thought he was going to quit. But he stuck with it, went back 1001 times and has become one of the top speakers in the world...and the President of the organization! Sales people will tell you that it takes many calls to make one sale. It takes numerous calls to the same client to close the sale (over 300!). Most account executives get scared and quit calling on the prospect. Most prospects will say that they were ready to buy on the next call. Why do you quit? What gets you scared to keep on calling?
- **We aren't serious about our goals – and quit.** Out of 100 people: 23 do not know what they want (77 left); 67 do know, but don't know how to get it (10 left); 8 are unwilling to pay the price (2 left). Only two will reach their goals. It is amazing that anyone gets anything done when you look at these facts. Determined, successful people have several things in common, though. They know what they want, they are willing to pay the price and they don't give up until they get it. In my Speaker Mentoring program I help people attain their goals by giving them the tools to accomplish them. I have one client, though that was given the opportunity to reach his goals and he refused because he didn't know what he wanted. To this day his career flounders because he won't take his goals seriously.
- **We lose interest or enthusiasm, or settle for being mediocre – and quit.** I admire people who set a goal and achieve it. My daughter has gotten interested in several projects as she has grown up. Everything from ballet, to tennis, to horseback riding to Egyptology. As with most young people she is exploring her interests to see where they will take her. Several years ago she got interested in Japanese cartooning which led to an interest in the Japanese culture. Last year she taught herself the language. She speaks it rather fluently today with very little accent. As a result of her efforts she got to go to Tokyo for her birthday last December. Today she says her goal is to be the best Anime cartoonist in the world. Her enthusiasm seems to build for this by the week. It is worth encouraging someone who wants to be the best.
- **We focus on the short term instead of the long term – and quit when the short term gets too hard.** Nido Quebin says, "The most critical

ingredient to success in any venture is a clear picture of what you are trying to achieve.” Great leaders always focus on the long term. Setting your sights on the destination will always help you get past the barriers that life throws in your path. So you are having a bad day. What has your week been like, or your month, or your year? A friend shared with me the other day that she was going through a dry spell in her business. She is disappointed but not discouraged because she knows that business success comes in cycles. We all experience dips in our momentum. True leaders tough them out knowing that if they stick with their priorities they will succeed ultimately. My friend said that she is not very worried about this dry spell because she feels God has always taken care of her through the tough times. Look back on your life and see whether or not God has taken care of you.

Back to the pyramid. The tour had ended and the guide gave us 15 minutes to get ready and board the bus. As we passed by the base of that pyramid I threw my back pack to my daughter and told her I would be right back. “Where are you going?” she asked. “To the top,” I said with confidence. “I didn’t come all the way down here to quit on third of the way up.” And up I went. I took it one step at a time and kept looking at the top (never looking back or down). As she shouted encouragement I made it to the top. The view was spectacular and I have great memories of the day I conquered my fears and quit letting them dominate me. The only question I had when I came back down was, “What’s next?”

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