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A Lesson From "The Apprentice" That Can Make You A Master

By Karon Thackston

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by: **Karon Thackston**

I have to admit, I was curious. When I saw previews of a new show called "The Apprentice," it made me want to at least watch the premiere to see what was going on. Immediately, I was hooked. The whole idea of candidates – from all walks of life, not just college grads fresh from their commencement ceremonies – vying for a position in one of Donald Trump's organizations piqued my interest. What kept my interest were the real-life advertising lessons every business owner needs to be reminded of.

Take, for instance, one episode where the teams were challenged to create an ad campaign. I was, needless-to-say, on the edge of my seat for the entire show. One team immediately decided to phone the client and setup an appointment to find out about the product, the end user, and other aspects that would make a big difference in creating the campaign. (Smart move!)

The other team, however, said they didn't have time to talk with the client. They were running behind schedule. Meeting with the client – in their opinion – would just waste an hour or two that could have been spent on more important tasks. (Excuse me?)

What happened? First of all, my husband came charging into the living room asking, "Do you believe that? Even *I* know you have to talk to the customer first!" Yes, he had been listening to me after all.

In the end, the campaign from the team who did speak with the client won the challenge. Once the losing team arrived in the boardroom, the project leader, Jason (Mr. "We Don't Have Time To Talk With the Client"), really got it from all sides.

Donald Trump's assistants, George and Carolyn, made a point of bringing up the fact that the client was not contacted. Jason's own teammates made a point of bringing up that the client was never contacted. And Donald? To quote, Donald said, "That was a HUGE mistake... you're fired!"

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This was fairly early in the show so you would have thought the other contestants would have learned from Jason's mistake. Not so. There was yet another episode where an Apprentice put what they wanted over what the client wanted/needed.

In this task, the teams were charged with selling Donald's new product, Trump Ice (bottled water). The winner was simply the team who sold the most in a given period of time. Nick, a salesman by trade, was immediately confident his team would win if they would just step aside and let him work his magic.

Ereka, the project manager for Nick's team, urged Nick to sit with her at the computer and research the market and the customer base for bottled water. Nick wouldn't even hear of it. To quote, "Telling me how to sell is like someone telling the Pope how to pray." So off went Nick using his same "high energy" sales pitch on every customer and focusing on what Nick wanted to sell – instead of finding the best benefits for the clients.

What happened? Nick flopped time and time again. A teammate (Bill) jumped in during one sales

meeting and helped the client to understand the benefits of buying Trump Ice. Bill made the sale.

In the boardroom, George immediately noted his disappointment in how little the team seemed to know about their prospective customers. And Donald chimed in by saying he had no idea why Nick thought his sales skills were so great when he had no clue about the customers he was selling to. Ouch!

The bottom line? The team lost. Why? Because Nick was busy trying to sell what he wanted to sell, and in the way he wanted to sell it, with no regard for the customer whatsoever.

The moral of the story? Know your customers. They are the ones with the money. It doesn't matter what you like. If *they* aren't happy with your site, your copy, your graphics, your product, or your service... they'll abandon you cold.

When you're creating a business plan, when you're writing copy, when you're creating a website, or developing a brochure. It's not about you... it's all about them. If one of the richest and most profitable businessmen in the world tells you target market research is vital to success, you can bet it is a wise strategy to follow.

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Is The Apprentice Bad For Your Health?

By Angie Dixon

If you know who I mean when I say Kwame, Bill and Troy, you're probably a fan of The Apprentice. I admit I'm not a fan myself; I don't watch much television and that particular show didn't grab my interest enough to be "appointment" watching. I have, however, followed its popularity with interest, for various reasons.

The main reason I'm so interested in The Apprentice is that it gives me insight. As a life and business coach, I try to see into my clients' heads and see where they're having problems and how we can design a way around those problems.

One of the biggest problems my clients face, and one of the biggest problems a lot of people face, is balance. This is where I fear The Apprentice becomes "bad for your health."

It's not healthy to work 18 hour days, or to dedicate your entire life to nothing but a job. People need something outside of work. They need to "sharpen the saw," at the very least, by taking care of their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs.

Stephen R. Covey talks about "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" in his book of that title. One of the things he talks about is balance, and how important that is. The other thing he talks about that really got my attention was effectiveness vs. efficiency. One involves dealing with people; the other is really just time management.

Donald Trump is a very successful man. Whether he's happy is something only he knows. And maybe the young people trying to be his next Apprentice are happy. They are young, after all, and obviously dedicated.

What worries me about this show is that everyday people, people with lives outside of work, will start to feel guilty about those lives and to buy into the image of being totally dedicated to work. This can lead to overwork, depression, anxiety, even heart attack or stroke.

The Apprentice can be fun to watch. But I urge you to think seriously before rearranging your life to "be like Bill."

Angie Dixon helps small business owners get their acts together. She is a personal development coach specializing in helping people integrate their home and work lives so they feel less stretched and more balanced. Get her FREE EBOOK on balance at

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to discover how coaching can change your life, contact Angie at

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