“Hustle” and business?

Less Stress

“Hustle.”

The term gets thrown around a lot in the business world, but where does hustle fit into YOUR business?

Some entrepreneurs will tell you that hustling means working longer and harder than your competitors.

These entrepreneurs brag about working long hours, pulling all-nighters and never having any time to relax.

...I am NOT one of those entrepreneurs.

If the only way to be successful is to work more hours, well... that sucks.

I don’t know about you, but that’s not why I got into this business. I didn’t start my business to work more.

In fact, I built my business so that I’d have more time for the things that matter to me, like spending time with my family.

What about you? Are you for hustle or against hustle?

Actually, hold that thought. It’s not an either/or decision.

We’ll come back to this in a second.

In my experience, there are TWO concepts of success.

Concept #1 is that hustle = success.

Concept #2 is that priorities = success.

I believe in Concept #2.

In business, you and I have the ability to design our business around our priorities, and this ability increases depending on what stage our business is in.

The Survival Stage

When we first start our business, we’re doing whatever we can to make a buck. This is what I call the “survival” stage.

When I first started my business, I’d been with my girlfriend Amy (who is now my wife... thank GOD!) for a long time, and people would often ask me why I hadn’t asked her to marry me yet.

The truth is, I hadn’t asked her yet because of where my business was at that time. Because, honestly, I was okay with surviving off of peanut butter and jam sandwiches but I wanted more for my family.

As new entrepreneurs we all start in the survival stage. In this stage, you are closer to the first concept of hustle because your resources are limited so you need to do a lot of the work yourself.

You should think about your priorities during this stage, but you might need to make some sacrifices when you’re first getting started.

“I was okay with surviving off of peanut butter and jam sandwiches but I wanted more for my family.”

The Success Stage

The second stage of entrepreneurship is when you start making enough money to cover your living and business expenses.

We can call this the “success” stage (financially speaking, anyways).

In this middle stage of success, that’s when you and I have a really important decision to make.

The success stage is when we can start basing our business decisions around our priorities, so it’s important that we get clear on what our priorities are.

The Significance Stage

As you gain more success in your business, you become busier. It’s also at this stage that you are working towards the third stage of your entrepreneurial journey, which I call “significance”.

The significance stage is when you realize your goal for starting your business in the first place, in terms of the life you want to live and the impact you want to have in the world.

It’s getting clear on your priorities that allows you to transition from success to significance, because the significance stage is the embodiment of the priorities you set for yourself when you first started.

Here’s a personal example:

It’s a story that I’ve told before, the story of the night I decided to sell my business.

I was away for the weekend with my family, staying in this cabin in the middle of nowhere.

It was pouring down rain and I woke up at 2 in the morning and couldn’t get back to sleep. I couldn’t go outside because it was pouring rain. I couldn’t turn a light on because I didn’t want to wake anybody up.

So I just laid there in the darkness with my thoughts, and I started thinking about two books I’d recently read.

One was Essentialism by Greg McKeown and the other was The One Thing by Gary Keller, and both books really force you to think about what’s important in business and in life.

At the time I was wrestling with coming to terms with what is most important to me.

Because the more success you experience, the more opportunities will come your way, and the more opportunities that arise, the more distractions will keep you away from things that matter.

And it’s not just about putting in more hours to fight your way through the distractions. It’s about getting clear on your priorities and designing your business around those things so that you can eliminate the distractions altogether.

So I remember laying there and wondering, “how do I make decisions in my business? How do I decide what to say yes to? What to say no to?”

Here’s what it came down for me:

1) Eliminating Bad Stress

We’ve all experienced bad stress, the stuff that keeps you up at night, that makes you anxious and fills you with self doubt and fear of what might happen.

Bad stress sucks and i want to do everything I can to eliminate bad stress.

2) Impact

My wife and I have a charity where we build schools in Kenya. That’s a big part of our life.

But we also want to have an impact on our family, friends, and community.

When evaluating a decision, I ask myself: “Will this allow me to add value for my colleagues or community? Will this be a positive experience for my family?”

When the answer to either of those questions is yes, I know that it’s probably a good decision.

3) Profitability

I’m spoiled because I’ve always been involved with selling software or information products, which both have huge profit margins.

I’ve been tempted to join ventures in other markets, but the fact is software and information products interest me, I have years of experience with them and they offer great profitability, so that’s what I stick with.

As I laid there in the cabin and worked through my priorities, I finally felt good about myself because I knew how they would apply to some big decisions I had to make.

When my wife woke up I turned to her and said, “Amy, I think I’m going to sell WishList,” which was my software company at the time.

WishList was our sole source of revenue, so this was a big deal, but I was confident that I could find profitability in a new venture that would be more aligned with my priorities.

Ultimately, that was the first step that ended up helping me make some major changes in my life and career that I’m now grateful for.

And it’s nothing against WishList or the product or the team, because they’re all amazing, but I just knew in my heart that WishList wasn’t the vehicle that would allow me to have the impact I wanted to have.

How this relates to the discussion about hustle:

Once you get clear on your priorities, you can take a step back and start being intentional while designing your business and your life, so it’s not just about hustle.

It’s about hustling for the things that matter and eliminating the things that don’t.

I like spending time with my family, so working long hours just isn’t an option. It works against my priorities and gives me stress.

That’s why I don’t travel very often. That’s why I dedicate my time to working on tasks that utilize my core skills and expertise, and I find other talented people to help with the tasks that don’t.

That’s why I have restrictions on the amount of time I spend coaching and consulting, and I honour those restrictions even if more work is available.

It’s why I limit the number of promotions I do per year and the amount of time I spend selling.

And that’s not always easy because saying no to speaking and coaching engagements, saying no to promotions, that’s a lot of potential revenue that you are saying “no” to.

But what that does is it motivates me to work much harder on the things that I do agree to, and that’s really where hustle comes into the equation for me.

To summarize:

Define what your priorities are and base your life and business around them, and when it comes time to do the work that you KNOW is important because you’ve chosen for yourself... HUSTLE!

It’s that simple.

What about you?

Why do you do what you do? If you can’t answer that easily, you need to think carefully about it.

Let me know in the comments what your priorities are and what hustle means to you.

Posted in Less Stress, Work LessTagged hustle

- *Stephen Clarke*

  Interesting comments Stu....I believe as Entrepreneurs we “like” the Hustle, it’s part of who we are and what we do. We’re no longer being told what we do, we are acting because we decided on a lifestyle that would allow us to take back control and do what we want and love to do. I’ve built several very successful companies and my newest is a few years short of exceeding a Billion Year and I still hustle....not because I have to but because I LOVE TO and it makes me feel good!!!

- *John Meese*

  Love this, Stu. Hustle is so much more than long hours, and success comes from much more than just working like a dog. It’s about staying true to your priorities.

- *Sensible Girlfriend*

  https://uploads.disquscdn.com/images/a848ef45a6f7e8654b05f0780de9acf67d59496264395179f54c73829f6f44c9.jpg
  I want to inspire women to know their value, stay true to themselves, love themselves and teach their children to do the same. I want to leave a legacy that changes the world one woman at a time. My priorities are first my wellbeing and my family’s wellbeing (part of that is connecting with my spirituality and soul’s purpose) Next living my life in a way that leaves an impactful legacy. The motivation of my hustle starts with listening within and checking how this opportunity feels. If it feels uplifting and exciting, and there’s an open door, then I take full action and dig deep for my own resources to make it happen. If I need support, I look to my community resources from the trusted relationships that I have built with quality people. I have learned how to do this from hard lessons which showed me the way. Thank you Stu for these great questions to help us discover ourselves more deeply. You are a huge inspiration and love whenever I’ve heard you talk (Michael Hyatt’s podcast This Is Your Life) Thankful and grateful for your generosity of heart!

- *Racheal Baxter Cook*

  Yes yes yes! I’m right there with you. I don’t hustle for the sake of hustling. I’d rather have a big enough business that allows me to create freedom and flexibility for what really matters most – my family.

- *Dani*

  Great post, Stu. I love the thinking and I have felt at times I have done the same, but (maybe this is an excuse) I find in management consulting one is constantly hustling and we are continually told we are only as good as the last engagement with a client. I know my priorities, but they don’t quite align yet with where I want to be and I want to retire to a new career within the next 5-8 years. I like your approach and I’d like to find mine that works similarly.

- *Greg*

  Stu, I’ve preached for years to whoever will listen that our work should be aligned with the substance of who we are (this is what I hear you saying in this post). If we have alignment we live more fulfilled lives. Finding alignment is not easy, but it is worth the journey. Well done.

- *Cody Weber*

  My priorities are to build a business that impacts those around me with the gifts God makes Himself known through. Another priority is to be the husband God calls me to be to my wife, and the father He calls me to be to my son (and hopefully more one day soon).

  Our online business is in the survival stage, but knowing that I don’t have to neglect my family (my priorities) to build a business is encouraging, but at the same time scary.

  I find myself believing lies like, “If I don’t put in X more hours each day/week/month, then I won’t be able to build a successful business.”

  It’s extremely encouraging to see people like you and Dale Partridge living out similar values as successful entrepreneurs.

  I am on a path to hopefully do the same thing.

  I’m still discouraged that I was not able to purchase your membership-building program a couple weeks ago, but as we are still in survival stage, you can imagine that things are very tight. Doing what we can.

  Thank you for encouraging posts like this one.

  - *Ryan*

    Your priorities are spot on; couldn’t have said it better.

- *Mark*

  Great info. My priorities right now is to find a backdoor entry into TRIBE 😀 Keep up the great work man!

- *Electra Fernand*

  I am into the photo business and it was a business I took over because a long time ago, I promised myself to retire from working by a certain age, and I was closely approaching that age..

  I have been a steward of this business that Jesus has given to me for three years right now, it has had it’s trials and it’s really great moments. And through it all I have been learning along the way.

  I am glad that I have been able to employ persons to help me make this dream a reality. I love interacting with my customers, I love serving them, and I love giving the best quality of service that I know how..

  But this is only a stepping stone to what I have always wanted to do, and that is to have an online business. It has been a dream for a while and with many trials and failures, I do believe that I am well on my way..

  My priorities are.being in constant communion with Jesus, family, making an impact in the lives of others, and being the best me that I can be. Seeing this business come to fruition will get me so much closer. And most importantly enjoying the precious gift of everyday life. For me that is my HUSTLE...

- *Cynthia Lucas Lovelace*

  Thanks! I needed that today. I’ve beenthing about so many things to build this online course. Its the type that I will have to spend more time with my students, because the ministry is very personal. People need to fill supported.
  I’m going to have to force myself to get up early to do my writing, so I can rest in the afternoon and make myself available to them.
  My time for writing is key, quiet and not distracted.

- *Daniel Daines-Hutt*

  I could not agree more

  And sometimes you have to take those new risks and stresses to get to that point, but you have to say no so you can say yes to the right things

  Keep rocking Stu

  And thanks for helping those here and in Kenya 😀

- *James Schramko*

  you will never own the jets... Great article

- *Odeny Dennis*

  you know Stu, am reading this and reflecting on the long hours I put on my business model...We are at the redefinition stage, when we want to move from charity alone, but rather charity and making money on the other hand. So, priorities are very important. The other day, I have started a school that offers self leadership skills to the young people in Kenya and during one of our classes, I asked the students to reflect on “what;s is truly important to them”
  This question, when asked at the right time, is one of those questions that throws you off balance and gets you grounded on what really matters.
  You wont believe I became a better student as the students taught me in the process. Finding out what is TRULY important to me and my context is foundation for creating an impact and significance in my life.

  thanks for sharing this

- *PDT*

  Hi Stu, great post. My focus is to help people share their knowledge, experience and expertise with more people than they ever dreamed possible so they make a positive difference in the world and be rightfully rewarded for doing so – on the basis that – money is simply the silent applause for a job well done. Peter Thomson

- *Rita GRaving*

  GREAT post and perfect timing. This is a paradigm shift I’m working through right now and this post took me back to why I stepped into the online business in the first place – to generate revenue 24/7 from anywhere in the world and create a life of balance and meaning. Thank you – this post is getting posted on the inspiration wall in my office! PS: loving TRIBE too!

- *Luis Miguel López*

  Hi all,
  Thanks Stu for all what you are sharing. I am at the survival stage, but really advanced in priorities and in living stress free 😀

  I completely agree with your idea of success and you made me took the decision to start a subscription model based business. I am trying to figure out what market, product or education to focus on, but at least I know what not to do.

  Kind regards to all from Spain

- *Dacia Coffey*

  Thank you. I needed to be reminded of this.

- *Luis Carlos Flores*

  Love this post Stu. I feel like I’m moving into the significance phase... thanks for giving me clarity on how to get clear on my priorities.

- *Darlene Cary*

  My priorities are to help women discover their own innate power so they can BE whatever they want. “It’s about hustling for the things that matter and eliminating the things that don’t.”

- *Vickie Smith*

  Great article. My priorities are my family, especially my kids.... it’s only now that they’re in upper grades I feel it’s time to venture forth into business again. I work mainly when they’re asleep or at school so hustle is limited by their needs. Had some big plans this week but one kid got a concussion, another has a bad cough... had to adjust my sails.....working on realizing what I can give is enough.....

- *Hugh Culver*

  Spot on Stu. This is worth a re-read every year.

- *Hayley Weatherburn*

  I agree! For me to be able to give to the world I also want to be able to play in this world! My business is to help make a change for others, but I have seen where businesses and stress can break a family and so I want to have both with a balance. Stu you really inspire me that it is possible... we CAN have it all! 😀

- *LaTara Bussey*

  Wow! This is some good stuff. One of the first things I do with my clients is a valued and priorities assessment. When they ask me why, I tell them that too often we live life around our goals and not the other way around. The formula is values + priorities = Success Path. When we get what matters most, the goals just work along with them.

BACK TO ALL ARTICLES

Other interesting articles

Copyright © 2016 Stu McLaren.
All rights reserved.