

Skate Where the Puck Is Going

by Sandy Geroux

As we look ahead toward success and prosperity, a quote from National Hockey League player Wayne Gretzky comes to mind. Upon being asked the secret of his incredible success, Gretzky said, "*I skate where the puck is going; others wait for the puck to come to them.*"

In terms of vision and foresight, taking initiative and then taking appropriate action, this simple statement says it all in terms of how we can be successful in business and in life.

Skate where the puck is going - Vision and Foresight

1. **Look ahead to where you want to be in 3 months, or 6 months - or a year.** In business, while we can't predict every move our market will make, we do know there are cycles in every industry and market. What are yours? Is the holiday season slow... or incredibly busy with activities that distract you from business and cause you to end the current year AND begin the new year badly? Business cycles are predictable. What do you do to prepare for busy times? Do you do enough during slow times to make busy times more productive and profitable - or do you lose business due to inefficiency, disorganization and "burn-out"? Do you continue to do the right things, even during busy times (keep up with leads, fill the pipeline and deliver world-class customer service) to minimize the slow times and even out your income? Look at your monthly income: where are the peaks and valleys? Do you set aside adequate savings during peak times to help carry you through the slow times and alleviate the stress that comes with uneven income cycles? Do you have a rainy day fund, or a tax payment fund? If not, start one!
2. **If you don't know where you should be at that time, make your best guess and strive for that goal.** Don't just forget about setting goals, simply because you're not exactly sure what you want to achieve. Set interim goals that will help you move forward, rather than stand still. Once you begin the actions necessary to achieve the interim goal, the end goal and its related actions will become clearer.
3. **Look back at recent performance to determine if you are on track to reach the "puck".** Only by monitoring your performance can you see if you're headed in the right direction, if you're skating fast enough, or if you're going to miss the net with your next shot. If you're new in business, monitor your activities and progress weekly. Back it up later to once a month or once a quarter (no less than that, no matter how experienced you are, to avoid being blind-sided by quick changes).

Don't wait for the puck to come to you - Taking Initiative

1. **If you see an opportunity, seize it!** Don't wait until everyone else has jumped on board, or it may be too late. *Case in point:* I know several REALTORS who took the initiative years ago to become designated as listing agents for area foreclosures. While a rise in foreclosures is unfortunate and no one wants to profit from others' misery, there are jobs to be done when they happen. How can you position yourself to help others and get paid for a job that needs to be done when similar changes happen in your market?

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Also, as a REALTOR in Rhode Island, when a neighborhood at one price point was down, a neighborhood at a different one was usually up. I began establishing myself at many price points in order to minimize the adverse effects of changing markets. Are you diversified enough - and positioned well enough - to prosper in *any* market?

- 2. Position yourself well for changes in any given situation.** Don't give up just because an opportunity doesn't exist right now. I used one mortgage representative for most of my real estate transactions. Others wanted my business, but I was loyal to one, so she got most of it. However, at one point, her support personnel and customer service changed, causing five real estate transactions IN A ROW to fail! I told her I'd have to switch if things didn't improve; they didn't, so I found myself looking for a new mortgage partner. I selected one who had stuck around, offering service wherever he could (he had done a few loans for me that my regular person couldn't do). Whereas most mortgage reps had given up, he'd stayed around... positioning himself perfectly to join my team when the situation changed. You never know when things will change. How do you position yourself for success when they do?
- 3. Learn the nuances of your market.** What are the nuances of your market? In my speaking career, I've had to learn how to access different corporate budgets in order to enable companies to hire me. If there wasn't enough in their "Speaker Fee" budget, sometimes a combination of the Speaker Fee and the Educational Materials budgets helped them bring me in. How can you help your customers hire you? What small nuances can you learn that will not only help them do so, but differentiate you from the rest of the market? Also, as a REALTOR, when I could demonstrate intimate knowledge of various nuances of an area, I became *much* more appealing to sellers there, because I demonstrated expertise in their particular area - not just general real estate knowledge. Those who take the initiative to become experts in a field, area, market or demographic, are the ones who will thrive.

Take Appropriate Action

- 1. Once you know where the puck is going, start skating!** Knowing exactly where the puck will be, at which precise moment it will arrive, and where you want it to end up does nothing for you if you don't take action to capitalize on it. Study your industry and market, be different and try new things, and then implement your plans - don't just make plans to do something, some day... do them *now*. At least begin them! If you don't, your competition will skate right past you, leaving you wondering why and how they succeeded.

Instead, skate where the puck is going... and leave your competition wondering just how you knew it would be there at the *precise* moment when you arrived...

With over 27 years of speaking and training experience, national speaker and author Sandy Geroux delivers motivational and educational programs to help "Turn Your Workplace Into a WOWplace™", helping organizations create WOW experiences for customers and employees alike by fostering a culture of trust, compassion and commitment to values, service and respect.

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