

Hello, this is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. As always, thank you for tuning in. We'd love to have your comments. Just click below. It's real easy. And, also click on our social media icons too please. Thank you.

All right. So, this week I want to talk about cleaning up. What do you need to clean up and why is that important? Well, cleaning up and the way I'm going to hopefully educate you on this, it frees you up practically and psychologically in so many ways. So, the reason this came to mind is my wife had me watch a couple of episodes of this Netflix show about tidying. Tidying is this phenomenon. It's this tiny little woman and she goes into people's houses and she teaches them in a very strict and orderly way, exactly how to go about tidying. We call it clean up, but tidying is a much less threatening term I think. So, she's genius in that sense.

I also remember that back in my days in the strategic coach program, every 90 days we would come together, and we would focus on high level improvement strategy for the business and one of the key things was every 90 days, what do you need to clean up? And I don't mean physically clean up necessarily, I don't mean cleaning out the garage or cleaning out your closet. I mean, there are a lot of sticky, ugly, gummy situations in your business and in your life that you probably need to kind of sweep up and clean up in order to be fully functional as a leader in your business, as a husband or wife, a father or mother, a good community member and even good to yourself.

So, the benefits are psychological for sure. We all carry around these things in our mind, whether consciously or subconsciously that bother us and I'm kind of a neat freak. If my desk is all cluttered with stuff it bothers me. If my garage is a mess, it bothers me. So sometimes when I would get in my 90-day program, I would get to those things and I would seriously talk about cleaning up those things.

And then the other benefit is efficiency. If you clean up things in your business and in your life periodically, you're just going to operate better.

And, the third thing is I think your team benefits too when they see you cleaning up or tidying up situations in your business or your life. I think they see too that you're working on the business and you're taking your own medicine and they see you and are encouraged by the fact that you're doing the things necessary to sweep away obstacles and to clear the path so that everybody can work as productively as possible.

So, there are six areas I think that you can focus on in terms of tidying or cleaning up. The first thing is your people and your employees. If you've got toxic employees, if you've got those employees that you've been allowing for years because they're really good project managers but they're horrible people people, or they're really good managers in the warehouse or whatever, and yet they're just rotten with people. They cause problems, they create dissension, they gossip, they just treat people poorly in a way that you wouldn't do it yourself ever if you could help it and you've got these employees that just you know in your mind and in your heart, you need to do something about that and you've been putting it off, and putting it off, and rationalizing it sometimes for years, clean that situation up.

I guarantee you the next day you'll feel better. You'll feel like the weight of the world is lifted off your shoulders. And guess what? I bet your employees come to you too after you clean up some of these toxic employee problems and they're going to say, "What took you so long?" How do I know this? Because in speeches all over the country I ask, and you should see the hands in the audience shoot up into the air. Every single person who's let toxic employees go almost come back and they say, "Yeah, that happened Wayne. That happened in our company. Absolutely."

The second place you're going to see improvement in terms of cleaning up is with your customers. If you've got customers that are, they don't appreciate your work, they're always beating you up on price or quality or both, they pay late, they nickel and dime you, they take trade discounts long after the trade discount period has passed, get rid of them. If you can get rid of them in a charming way, you're not even saying, "I'm going to fire you as a customer." You're going to say, "You know what? I think you'd be happier if you talked to XYZ Manufacturing company. I think they probably could produce this product better for you," or, "You'd be better calling my friendly competitor across town because I think they're better at this kind of building or paving or whatever than we are. They would probably be a better fit for you."

You can do it in a charming and kind of want to say lighthearted, but a charming way, but just get rid of them because they're here all the time. I'm telling you. They're just eating away at your happiness, and your self-esteem, and your sense of fun in the business. So toxic customers can go as well.

Products or services that no longer really produce for you. So, we had this product, or we had this service 30 years ago and people loved it and we still employ two or three people there, but it doesn't make any money and it seems to cause more problems. I remember talking to somebody and 95% of the problems in their business came from a department that accounted for none of their profits, none of their profits, and I was like, "Well, why don't you all just get rid of it?" I mean, spin it off to the employees, sell it to a competitor, do something and boom, man, you should have seen their eyes. They were so happy, and they immediately began talking to competitors about buying that piece of the business. I think probably if they had it bigger and more scalable, it would have worked. So, another company was able to come in, acquire it, add it to their scale, and then it worked really well.

But if you've got a product, or a service or something that doesn't give you joy, that doesn't make money for you, that causes headaches in the business, outsize relative to its size, then boom, get rid of it.

What management practices do you have in your organization now that don't make sense in today's competitive marketplace? So we got a call recently from a longtime client and he's a great guy and he said, "I'm concerned that some of my employees are banking their annual vacation and the company handbook says you can only carry forward so many vacation days, but some of them are carrying forward lots and I think they're going to take advantage of the company at some point. Should I enforce that, or should I let it go?" And I said, "Hey man, in today's workplace when people can go to your competitor and make more money like that if they want to, you need to be relaxed about those things. Don't be a hard head."

Just because it's in the company manual and because by God, dad ran the company that way, you've got to be reasonable in your management practices today given employee's wishes, given people's wishes for freedom, and time off, and autonomy, and self-direction. It's a new world out there in terms of employment. So those kinds of management practices that probably made sense in the seventies or eighties probably don't make much sense anymore. So, get rid of him.

And then finally, the last thing is what relationships in your family are causing you headaches? Have you not spoken to your brother, or sister, or son, or daughter in any number of months or years because of a family blowup? Bury the hatchet. Bury the hatchet, give them a call, reach out. Maybe they'll be rotten to you, but you will have made the noble and high road attempt to correct that relationship. If your marriage is in trouble, go to marriage counseling. If your relationships with other members of the family, go to family counseling. Get your family relationships cleaned up. If you're angry with

your brother all the time in the business, by gosh get a mediator in there to help you talk and understand each other, and so you can both be focused with one common vision on where the business is headed in the future.

So those are the six areas that I think are ripe for you to focus on in terms of cleanup and tidying and you'll feel better, you'll work better, your employees will see improvement and they'll do better. It's really a totally win-win situation. So, I'd love to have your cleanup stories. This is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute.