

Hi everyone. This is Wayne Rivers from FBI where *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week I want to talk about another book. This is a book by Roy M. Spence. *It's Not What You Sell, It's What You Stand For*. Forget about the selling part. I thought it was a book about sales, business development. It's not. The bottom part of the title is what counts. It's what you stand for. He says that every extraordinary business is driven by purpose, which I think is true. Now, for us, mission and purpose are synonymous. If you have one of those horrible, long gobbledygook mission statements, I guarantee you it's not a reflection of your purpose. So, work on it. Send it to me. By gosh, I'll help you. Mission statements are awful in most cases.

But now what about this is important to you before I go off on mission statements. What about this is important to you. Well, we wake up, we go to work. It's considered full-time work if you work 2,000 hours a year. For contractors, that must be 2,500, 3,000, more? Contractors work exceedingly hard. But I think this passage written by Studs Terkel, New York City writer, sums it up when we talk about work and career. "Working is about a search too for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition, as well as for cash, for astonishment rather than torpor, in short for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying."

Life instead of dying. That's what people are looking for at work. And the only way that you can appeal to those higher, more noble senses is to give people a mission, a compelling mission that they can attach to. Their personal mission aligns with your company mission, and then you put together people, more and more people that share the mission, and before long you launch into the stratosphere.

Mission statements, I would say 95% of the mission statements that we've seen over the years are just awful, and I'm kind of mean about it sometimes when I go into meet contractors. I'll say, "Hey, what's your mission statement?" Because it's out of the lobby in a framed 8-1/2 by 11. It's out in the lobby and it's a bunch of meaningless gobbledygook, and they can never, ever, ever recite it. And I know that's mean, but if you can't recite your own mission statement, by gosh, why even have one? If you can't recite it, surely the new person who just signed up for work 30 days ago can't recite it.

Your mission should be so simple that a kid could recite it at the drop of a hat if asked to do so. So, we had a mission statement. It was one sentence. I thought it was pretty clear, but we had a consultant at bootcamp one time, and he knew the mission statements of two or three or four of his members, but he didn't know FBI's mission statement. And that told me right there, that was a fault. That was my fault. That wasn't his... well, it was his fault, but it was my fault mostly, because our mission statement, even though it was one line and reasonably simple, it needed to be more concise. It needed to be more brief. It needed to be more impactful. So, we shrunk it down and shrunk it down and shrunk it down.

We build better contractors. Ask any FBI person anytime day or night... I mean, let's be reasonable... they can say "We build better contractors," and they will say it.

So, Spence writes about the blueprint for getting out of beige land. I like the way he says that. You've heard Dennis say it. You've heard me say it. Construction is a commodity. Most services, most goods and services in any economy are commodities. And think about. If you weren't building the new hospital addition in your city, could some other contractor do it pretty much equally as well with the kind of similar schedule that you? The chances are probably good that the answer is yes.

So, Spence says four things to getting out of beige land, to transforming yourself to be something other than a commodity. The first thing is build an organization that truly makes a difference in the marketplace. Second, become a leader on a mission. That's the most important point here. The third thing, bring your mission to life so your constituents know it. Who are your constituents? First, your employees, but also your customers, your trade partners, your bank, your bonding. All the people with whom you work, they're your constituents. They should be on that mission with you to the extent humanly possible.

But for them to understand the mission, you've got to advocate it. You've got to educate people on it. You've got to be out there talking about the mission 110% of the time. It's redundant, and I know you feel like an old schoolteacher or something, but you've got to get out there and really drill the mission into everyone's brains until they get it themselves.

And the fourth thing is you've got to transcend the generic rather awful mission statement that most people have. Spence says that your employees will be responsible for making the difference that you're trying to make. And that's right. If you can gather people that are on the same mission with you, they're going to multiply your efforts. One person can work really hard, really long hours, and one person can touch a lot of lives, but if you've got many people on the same mission, it's exponential how many lives you can touch.

Now, Spence writes, and I agree, "A mission cannot be fulfilled without a great strategy in place to pull it off." Which comes first? Here's our 2023 business plan. It's got our milestones, our objectives on one side. It's got our mission, vision and values on the other. Your plan might be 50 pages. It might be 10 pages; it might be 192 pages. I don't know what it is, but everybody has to have a written plan, in my mind, so that everybody can make sure every day when you look at that card that you're on the same mission.

Which comes first, the mission or the plan? I think it doesn't matter. I think that FBI probably had it backwards in a sense that we always had plans. We always have had written business plans. We've always had a mission. It wasn't as concise as it is now. We've always had objectives. We kind of backed into the mission, vision and values, the culture that we wanted to build. When we started, when I started in my career 30 something years ago, nobody talked about culture. Nobody even talked about business plans. But culture clearly is a huge driver. Which is more important, the culture or the plan? I'm going to say the culture is most important. The mission's the most important, but the plan supports all of that. They go hand in hand. They work hand in glove with each other. Make it your job to have a compelling mission and rally your people to your mission and they'll expand your efforts exponentially.

Have a thanks to John Woodcock who turned me onto this book. It's a great one. I recommend it. Oh, fun fact. Fun fact. I want to end on a high note here. Sam Walton, the founder of Walmart, was in, guess what? A peer group. I never knew that before I read this book. In the early 1970s, there was a group of eight small regional discount chains that got together to try to compete better against Kmart. At the end of one of those meetings in 1971, one of the CEOs thought it'd be interesting to hear what each thought his company sales would be in 10 years.

First guy said, "I'm at 40 million, we'll be at 80 million in a decade." The second guy said, "60 to 100." The next guy said, "I'm at a 100, 160." Sam Walton said, "Walmart stores at that time were \$44 million. In 10 years, they would be at \$2 billion." And everybody in his peer group laughed at him, and the rest is history, isn't it, as they say.

Okay, what do you stand for? What does your company stand for? How can you rally your troops to get on board with you with a compelling clear vision and mission? This is Wayne Rivers at FBI, where *We Build Better Contractors*.