

Buried in Backlog

Coach Kevin helps Vince D'Agostino breakthrough an overwhelming backlog of decisions, projects and irritants, and rediscover his personal life.

There's no question that Vince D'Agostino, Certified Public Accountant (CPA) is driven and determined to succeed. In the early 1990s with the United States in a recession and a soft job market, D'Agostino caught the entrepreneurial bug and ventured out to create his own destiny. In 1993, he founded Mayfield Financial Services, a traditional accounting and tax services firm.

Not long after establishing the company, D'Agostino, like a true entrepreneur, saw another opportunity and realized that there was tremendous need in the market for a financial planning service headed by a CPA. Traditional firms had financial planners that only wanted to sell versus build relationships and help make clients wealthier. With this in mind, D'Agostino set out to expand the firm to provide a full set of services, expert advice, and the ability to help clients achieve their financial goals. To accomplish his objective, D'Agostino, under Mayfield Financial Services, added investment and insurance solutions in addition to traditional tax and accounting services. Then he created Mayfield Mortgage to offer lending solutions.

VICTIM OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS

D'Agostino's concept resonated well, almost too well with the market, and he quickly became a victim of his own success. His client base expanded, projects increased, and to get an idea of how serious D'Agostino was about building a successful business, you only need to look at the number of hours he dedicated to his firm. "Generating business wasn't a problem, more work was coming in than I could handle. I was working a hundred hours a week for fifty-two weeks, for ten years," says Vince D'Agostino. D'Agostino was consumed by his business. Despite working all the time, he felt like he was always running behind, while only making the same money as someone working forty hours. And while he didn't need to make more money, he did need to make things flow more

smoothly, do things smarter and work more effectively. In addition, he needed to regain control of his personal life and his health.

Frustrated and looking for a way to turn things around, in 2004, D'Agostino turned to Kevin Lawrence, a business coach that specializes in helping successful entrepreneurs and business leaders get what they really want in business and in life by using breakthrough strategies to overcome obstacles, deal with tough decisions and capitalize on new opportunities.

A FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON THE REAL ISSUES

Coach Kevin had to help D'Agostino get a fresh perspective on his business and his problems. To do this, they met for a three day session in Vancouver where Kevin took Vince out of his usual routine and into a new environment. After a four hour walk around the Vancouver seawall (and a subsequent boardroom session), digging deep to get to the real issues, things started to become clearer for D'Agostino. "Before meeting with Kevin, I didn't even know what my problem really was, I just knew, I needed to make a big change. Kevin really tailored his approach to what I needed, based on his deep insight into workaholics," says D'Agostino.

There were a dozen logical problems that Coach Kevin could have helped D'Agostino tackle, but more importantly, which issues were core to all his problems? According to Coach Kevin, "Entrepreneurs can reach a point where they have twenty problems that we could work on. I dig deep to uncover the one to three issues that are common to all problems, and then we tackle those issues to achieve results." After several candid conversations, Kevin uncovered two core issues.

COACH Kevin

GET WHAT YOU REALLY WANT. NOW.

OUTGROWING A START-UP STRATEGY

First, there was a major backlog of client projects and decisions, all frustrating D'Agostino and causing him stress. D'Agostino needed to streamline the business, alleviate the bottlenecks and make the decisions required to relieve the company of the backlog. The discovery was truly revealing, "Yes, this is what is causing my stress!" says D'Agostino.

According to Coach Kevin, "Almost every client that I work with has a backlog of projects, decisions, internal conflicts, underlying fears or things that frustrate them that just don't get handled. And while having backlogs isn't logical, it's usually a result of big decisions that they are avoiding."

D'Agostino wanted to make sure projects were done right; as a result, he controlled everything including reviews and approvals. However, because he controlled everything, he actually slowed down the process and caused frustration for himself and his clients. "Vince had outgrown the strategy that worked for him when he started his business, and now he essentially had to shed his skin – his outdated systems and skill sets - so that he could catch up to where he was today," says Coach Kevin. Ironically, the worst thing about having a backlog is that the law of attraction comes into play, and in reality you end up attracting greater backlog, more problems and headaches. Coach Kevin realized that unless D'Agostino was able to get systems to run better - and without him - he would be plagued with his problems forever. He had to stop operating as a start up and instead, take his business and his leadership skills to a higher level.

UNHEALTHY LIVING

Kevin also encouraged D'Agostino to deal with his second major issue. For D'Agostino, throwing himself into his work was what he loved, it was all he knew. After all, many of his business associates were workaholics so it was natural for D'Agostino to be the same. "If you surround yourself with people that you want to be like, you will become like them," he says. While D'Agostino was successful modeling people that

made it big in business, he forgot to seek out role models that thrived in both business and in life. He created a busy, profitable business, but unfortunately it was at the expense of his health and his personal life. His firm dominated his life, he had few personal interests, and he was stressed out and fifty pounds overweight. "Entrepreneurs, like Vince, usually run into major obstacles as a result of not having enough time off personally. They need to take the time to step back and reflect on the business. They need to spend more time making decisions to drive the business ahead versus spending all their time running the day-to-day operations. When I first start working with a client, I typically get them to double their holidays so that they are fresh, reinvigorated and more productive in the end," says Coach Kevin.

COACHING – A CATALYST FOR ACTION

After identifying the core issues, Coach Kevin and D'Agostino set goals and created tangible, action plans specifically tailored to D'Agostino's unique working style and personality. The first step was to identify the true reality of the backlog, which turned out to be the number of client projects. The next step was to figure out the total number of projects in the backlog and then determine reasonable targets to achieve - to reduce the backlog - within a three month and six month timeframe. D'Agostino then had to pick the projects that had to be completed on a weekly and monthly basis and delegate responsibility for completion.

According to Coach Kevin, "One of the benefits of being your own boss is that you don't have to report to anyone, but, this can be a double-edged sword. When clients make the commitment to work with me, I help make them accountable – giving them the leverage to move through the obstacles they would otherwise avoid."

To help D'Agostino rediscover his personal life, Coach Kevin helped him become clear on what he wanted his life to look like. It was essentially about developing his business around his life, not the other way around.

"Entrepreneurs have a passion, along with big goals and the desire to do what it takes to make it happen. They like to build wealth on their own terms, with the goal of creating a more enriching life. Along the way though, they often run into major obstacles that can consume them professionally and personally, and then lose sight of why they are building the business in the first place," says Coach Kevin. "My role is to help them step back, reflect, refocus and breakthrough these obstacles to get what they want in business and in life."

BREAKTHROUGH RESULTS

Ninety days after engaging Coach Kevin, D'Agostino and his firm experienced many tangible results. A year later, his results were significant. D'Agostino reduced the backlog of client projects, streamlined business processes, improved his health and rediscovered his personal life. Prior to engaging Coach Kevin, D'Agostino's backlog stood at approximately 400 projects. Working with Kevin, that number has progressively decreased and is now at less than 100 projects, a 400% reduction. D'Agostino also hired additional people of a higher caliber so that he can delegate more and build his business, without compromising his personal goals.

Review and approval processes also contributed to the backlog. Previously, every project needed to go through D'Agostino for review before it was completed, making him a major bottleneck in the process. Once he understood that the backlog was causing his stress, his inner discovery was that he had to change his processes to turn projects around faster. Today, reviews and approvals – along with almost all of the administrative functions – are delegated to several people in the firm, significantly increasing the speed at which projects are completed. Reducing the backlog and turning around projects faster has led to another major improvement, revenue growth. While not an original objective, it is a number that D'Agostino and Kevin monitor. In 2004, revenue grew 66%. In the first three months of 2006, revenue growth is more than 61% making Mayfield Financial Services well on track to beat last year's number.

According to Coach Kevin, "I find that when clients work through obstacles, they can't help but to make more money. Even though it isn't typically a first priority, they almost always make more money because of the changes they are making."

D'Agostino has also rediscovered his personal life. He works less, works out, spends more time with his family and now takes a lot more vacations. He has lost fifty pounds and is enjoying a less stressful, more fulfilling life.

FINAL THOUGHTS

"Kevin is a person who is looking for results. He has a lot of knowledge, experience and insight into what it takes to have a more successfully, fulfilling life. I run nearly every major business decision by Kevin for his opinion," says D'Agostino.

When offering advice to other entrepreneurs considering whether or not to use a business coach, D'Agostino says, "Other entrepreneurs need to assess their individual situations and then determine first if they need a coach, and then second, which coach is right for them. Does the coach know what you are going through? Can they walk the walk? Have they dealt with people like you? I looked at three or four coaches and spoke with all of them. Kevin is the only one that I could relate to. He knew the exact profile of someone like me and therefore he must have dealt with someone like me before. That was essential in my decision on which coach to select."

About Coach Kevin

Kevin Lawrence is a business coach, speaker and agent of change, who is driven by a relentless passion for helping entrepreneurs and business leaders get what they really want, in business and life. He deeply believes that entrepreneurs can have tremendous business success along with an enriching, adventurous and fulfilling lifestyle, taking a 'have your cake and eat it too' mentality to an entirely new level.

With more than a decade of hands on experience as a business coach to hundreds of entrepreneurs and business leaders across Canada and the United States, Kevin is an expert at helping clients overcome major obstacles, deal with tough decisions and capitalize on new opportunities to achieve breakthrough results. His strategies, style and savvy approach have helped his clients increase revenue, profitability and productivity; build higher caliber teams; attract ideal (and eliminate headache) clients; and, reduce stress levels and hours worked so that they are freed up to live their personal version of outrageous quality of life.

For more information, visit www.CoachKevin.com or call 1-877-564-6224