

Re:Focus

simple ideas to help you thrive

by Simon Sinek

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The Bruder Principles

Like most optimists, I'm easily excited by the prospect of something good happening. This is a wonderful disposition for staying happy, but it can be treacherous in business. If I get along with someone, I tend to trust them at their word. Call it naiveté if you want, but I don't understand why anyone would lie or exaggerate their capabilities.

Unfortunately, like most naïve, overly-trusting optimists, this has burned me on more than one occasion in business. A perfect, and frequent example, is the case when someone, inspired by my work (or at least they say they are), approaches me with an offer to do something. Maybe they want to redesign the website, help boost sales, do some rebranding exercise, implement some better systems or figure out a social networking strategy. They promise all the things I think I need, they say they are good at all the things I'm bad at, they have lots of time for all the things I have no time for and they have a list of wonderful clients and case studies that demonstrate how perfectly suited they are to help me "achieve my goals."

On more than one occasion, I engaged in a business relationship with these well-intentioned souls and have found myself on the losing side of the equation. Often the results fall well short of what I expected or hoped for (which is often very different than from what they expected). For example, when someone said they could completely redo my website, I thought that meant everything, including the store interface. Turned out, they don't have much experience with building a really good online store – so everything looked nice, but my store still didn't work as I hoped. These relationships never end well and I end up shelling out a lot of money and not getting what I thought I was going to get.

Since I learned the Bruder Principles, however, I'm proud to say this scenario no longer happens.

Named after Ron Bruder, entrepreneur, philanthropist and my mentor, Bruder taught me a simple technique to ensure that the relationships I engage in offer true value and last for the long term.

1. Do a Background Check

Be it an individual or a company, it takes only a few minutes to google them and do a D&B check. On more than one occasion I've discovered that a company was on shaky ground before we worked with them.

2. Slow Down

So many deals, especially between small companies, are done with excitement and optimism driving them. Simply slowing down the process reveals so much. I slowed down a deal that was going too fast and it completely changed the dynamic of the relationship. The other party became more aggressive, more impatient with me. They seemed a little too keen to get the contract signed quickly. Good business relationships should not be built to go fast, they should be built to go far.

3. Start Small

No deal needs to be comprehensive from the start. A new relationship should start small. Doing so often reveals true intentions and, more importantly, allows you to test the relationship with less on the line. Instead of a complete rebranding, for example, start with just a logo and see how it works out. I won't do a big deal with new relationships anymore. They all start small.

4. Don't Work With Anyone in Trouble

Pay close attention to the kinds of things that are causing someone stress. If they seem to be under financial stress, either their business is not doing well or they are having personal money issues, do not engage with them. You cannot have a productive business relationship when someone is panicked about where their next pay check will come from. (note: there is a difference between not having a lot of money and being stressed about it).

These four simple principles have worked so well to protect me and my interests and I won't do a single deal now without employing all of them.