

An Up Close Interview with Michael Marshall

“The Business Doctor” from www.AskTheBusinessDoctor.com

Interviewer:

Should I call you Michael or do you prefer me to call you “The Business Doctor”?

Reply:

Calling me Michael is just fine.

When I was real young about 3 or 4 years of age back in Chicago, Illinois where I grew up; my grandmother used to call me Mikey.

I prefer the name Michael over Mikey.

Interviewer:

We have five main business topics that we would like you to comment on and to share some of your knowledge and insights.

1. Leadership
 - a. Setting Direction
 - b. Decision Making
 - c. Coaching and Mentoring
 - d. Multi-Tasking
 - e. Organizing Activities & Leading People
 - f. Managing Upwards and Downward
 - g. Developing Others
2. Interpersonal Relations and Communication
 - a. Style of Relating To Others
 - b. Role in Group Situations
 - c. Communicating and Influencing Others
3. Problem Solving and Thinking
 - a. Approaching Problems
 - b. Thinking About Business Issues
 - c. Making Decisions
4. Understanding of Self and Others
 - a. Career Aspirations
 - b. Receptiveness of Feedback and Change
 - c. Insights About Leading Others
5. Emotion and Motivation
 - a. Personal Qualities, Values, and Motivators
 - b. Adapting to Change
 - c. Handling Pressures and Responsibilities

Interviewer:

Please comment and share some of your knowledge and insights on these subjects.

Response from Michael Marshall who is known as “The Business Doctor” on the website www.AskTheBusinessDoctor.com

I have extensive experience, training, education, and business maturity in the subjects that you are asking about so I think we will have a valuable discussion

I am happy to share some of my knowledge and insights with you.

All of these subjects are critical for effective business growth and business development.

**These subjects do not come natural to anyone.
They must be trained and re-trained continually.**

This is why training, education, and continual education are so important in business.

I have some special insights on how to work with people that comes from my extensive psychology training and experience prior to my 25 year business career.

**I also have extensive training on adult learning and interpersonal relations.
“What makes people tick, or do what they do” can be complex at times.
“Understanding Others” and Motivating Others” are certainly key abilities.**

My unique psychology background significantly contributes to my effectiveness.

Let me just start at the top of your list and share some information with you in the order that you have listed.

LEADERSHIP

Setting direction - Decision making - Coaching & Mentoring - Multi-Tasking - Organizing activities & Leading people - Managing upwards and downward – Developing others.

Setting direction is often referred to in several different words and phrases such as a business plan, a strategy, goal setting or MBO “management by objectives” to name just a few. It needs to be put into details in all departments; operations, finance, service, sales, marketing, etc. etc.

This is also accomplished with individual job descriptions and responsibilities accompanied by an incentive program to support every object.

If an objective or task is not important enough to have an incentive or reward system directly attached to it to reinforce it, obviously it may not be very important to the company’s growth or operation.

A strategy and plan is important to give focus both in actions and in funding to help reach a company’s objectives.

Not having a plan or strategy is like a ship without a rudder. It may leave the dock but it will sail endlessly and maybe in circles but will never reach a destination.

A plan and strategy also help give management and staff a purpose.

This ‘purpose’ helps create two things.

1. Helps create a healthy working environment for a passion and a cause which is critical.

2. Helps staff organize their thoughts, efforts, behavior and actions to focus on the plan and strategy. It gives them a target for aiming their daily tasks and efforts towards. Staff needs a target to aim at and to judge if some of their work efforts have come off the target. This often equates to “wastes” of all type which needs to be identified and improved on quickly.

Coaches in sports often comment on how their team players gain confidence with a game plan especially if they have practiced it prior to the game against their opponent. Confidence comes from practicing and being prepared.

This is similar to a company and business with strategies and objectives. Training, education, brain storming sessions, and business rehearsals is most helpful in being successful.

After all, a business or company with their employees and staff is a team.

Sports teams have offense, defense, special teams, etc. with players in each.

Companies and businesses have sales, marketing, customer service, engineering, finance, credit, quality control, and more.

Staff at all levels and employees of all departments in companies need to support each other and utilize everyone’s skills, as a team.

If a company is serious about growing and winning in the business world, they need to act as a team, practice as a team, prepare as a team, share the same team strategy, and show up as a team at the big game called “The Real World of Business Development”.

The president’s and executives’ main function is to coordinate this team effort and help put the team in a position to advance up the field to win.

Decision making has some critical factors for it to be effective.

1. A good executive or manager is compelled to re-evaluate all decisions whether they were good or bad and learn from them to be become better.
2. Decision making includes risk taking which is a component of business growth and business development.
3. Lack of a decision can be as negative as a bad decision.
4. When analyzing decision making of tasks, events, or changes you must establish several things;
 - a) Aggressively & creatively obtain information
 - b) Determine possible results both negative and positive for going forward with a decision, delaying, or not going forward.
 - c) Establish exit plans if a decision proves not to be wise, an acceleration plan if a decision proves to be good; also contingency plans in case changes and modifications are needed.
 - d) With decisions; objectives, goals, measurements and time lines are needed to monitor for any progress or results. Continual feedback is needed.
 - e) Most important is “Root Cause Analysis”. With any problem, issue or challenge, you must get to the “root cause” of the situation. This takes considerable effort and discipline to do but you must. Making decisions about only the symptoms of issues will not achieve any positive results and the issues will only resurface and objectives will not be met.

A thorough investigation of issues and challenges, focusing time and decision making on these “root causes” will help advance to positive results.

Coaching & mentoring is important for training and for employees’ personal growth that can help contribute to the company’s business development.

It is also critical for employees to feel important, worthy, needed, and to give them a feeling of a positive and noble cause to their efforts.

It is well documented that a critical factor in all successful businesses that are growing is the feeling of “cause” or “passion” by their employees.

Successful coaches and mentors have 4 things in common.

1. They are well trained and take pride in their continual re-retraining to keep up to date.
2. They have significant experience
3. They themselves have had excellent coaches and mentors in their career
4. They must be unselfish, willing to share, take pride in not having personal self gratifying hidden agendas, and willing to “leave their ego outside the door”

Multi-Tasking is a very interesting subject.

Some say to put your tasks in piles of ‘a, b, and c’. Then take on pile ‘a’, then ‘b’, then ‘c’.

But what happens if you never get to finish the ‘b’ pile let alone get to the ‘c’ pile?

Some say to delegate all ‘b’ & ‘c’ tasks to others to make time for the ‘a’ pile.

But what happens if those that you delegate things to are not well trained and not able to accomplish an excellent job with these.

Some say the key is to work longer hours regularly and be the opposite of the “clock punchers” which arrive at work about 8 am and leave right at 5 pm and of course take a one hour lunch.

The opposite would be to arrive at 5 am and leave around 8 pm and often not take a lunch.

It is well documented and studies show that more working hours do not necessarily get more work done and actually often contribute to more errors that cost the company money and lost revenue.

In my 25 year career, I have learned how to be Muti-Tasked and efficiently get things accomplished.

This has come by way of both extensive training and experience.

When extensive time at work is needed, good managers and leaders do it gladly.

But if such effort does not keep you caught up and even ahead of important things, this is a symptom of more serious issues that need improving.

Organizing activities and leading people need all that has been discussed so far.

People cannot be forced.

This just does not work and such a method will only produce negative things that will cost the company and hold the company back from growing.

A typical affective approach in leading is to create a positive and a “passion” environment rich in support and training along with aggressive rewards to reinforce critical tasks, actions, and objectives.

Praise and showing sincere appreciation with generously acknowledging those contributing is important.

After such implementation, employees that are negative and a 'nay sayer' need to be removed. Negativism must be avoided because it will hold back the positive culture and business development.

Good employees do not want the negative employees around them.

An effective working environment has a "can do" approach. Staff in such positive working environments will find ways to accomplish the difficult.

Employees in positive working environments look forward to coming to work and have a strong feeling of personal investment of doing far beyond an average effort. There are good feelings to being needed.

Managing upward and downwards is critical to be effective.

Mutual sincere respect and appreciation for one another is the key.

I have significant skills and experience that executive level staff normally are very interested in utilizing and I welcome the opportunity to share with others at all levels.

I also welcome opportunities to learn from others of all levels. My personality pushes me to search out learning experiences to increase my skills because I know the value of it.

Developing others both above and below is critical for business development.

To be effective as a leader one must be willing to share and work with all levels above and below. This effort and willingness must come from "the head", "the gut" and "the heart".

People actually will pick up on the positive vibes from this and be motivated to work with you better and at a much higher level.

To be effective in sharing and leading, one must have sincerity and good will.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS & COMMUNICATION

Style of relating to others – Role in group situations – Communicating & Influencing Others

My style in relating to others utilizes all that has been discussed so far.

I show respect, care, and appreciation without 'hidden agendas' that are often so negative to a company's growth.

As Dale Carnegie says "It is important for a good leader to generously bask in the glory of others no matter how little or big that others contribute".

Never take the credit for others work and efforts.

No matter how small or large of effort which others contribute, show significant public appreciation for all efforts and contributions.

Such things significantly contribute to a positive working environment and help create “**employee and customer passion**” which is critical for business growth.

I take pride in creating a positive working environment where the staff actually look forward in coming to work in the morning, look for ways to contribute to business growth, and feel a need for their services to customers.

I am always investigating and probing for information that can contribute to this positive work environment, to help increase customer satisfaction, and to help in business development.

Such an environment is ‘catchy’ and will significantly influence customers to be motivated to refer many customers to such a business.

Customer referrals are the back bone to most businesses especially in the service sector. Employees are the key for this.

This will also contribute immensely to retaining and acquiring top skilled employees as well as getting customers excited about doing business with your company

My role in group situations is dynamic.

Here, my psychology background is most useful.

First of all, no leader has all answers and can do everything.

A good leader will probe and gather information. They will actively ask for ideas, suggestions, and utilize others to help gather such.

When there is an issue, conflict or problem, a lot of detailed information is needed.

A good manager and leader will seek out a thorough understanding of the situation, the personal feelings of the individuals involved as well as their level of skills and experience in such.

The leader then proceeds with the fundamental approach of reflecting back all information to verify all of it and get clarification.

Often, along the way much constructive and important information comes out, and misunderstandings are cleared up.

This often helps resolve much of the issues, conflicts, and problems.

One must move into the next step which is learning from the situation and what improvements do individuals and the company, need to make.

We must always learn and use what we learn.

Do not let any situation go by that can help with this important objective.

No matter how big or little a situation may seem, show respect for others and their feelings. Refer to the business’s objectives and strategies and how the situation may be affecting these.

Make sure all individuals understand the business objectives and issues.
Try so very hard to diffuse the personal feelings side of things with all individuals involved. This is important.

For business growth and operations effectiveness, I highly recommend teams and a team approach.

Of course, a leader must monitor all activities to make sure objectives are met on the time line and actively solicit ideas and improvements along the way.

This sometimes is called MBWA which stands for “management by walking around” to observe and ask employees about what is going on and for ideas how to improve.

This needs to be done with both your employees and your customers.

Communications and influencing others has become complex and evolved a great deal. Several years ago, companies struggled communicating with employees and customers. Then came weekly staff meetings, weekly reports, daily reports of all kinds, and daily email for the employees; and for the customers came aggressive advertising, direct mail, and telemarketing.

The excessive use of these methods has burdened both the employees and customers, often becoming a negative.

As medical doctors often say, “Too much of anything is not good for anyone”.

Add to this, that employees and customers are very busy with today’s work and personal life, and lacks time to put much attention to communications.

“Less can be more”.

Communications in today’s work place and market place has to be short, effective, creative, attention getting, important in the eyes of whoever it is directed towards, keep attention, instill into the memory of others, and strategic.

It needs to be time effective and cost effective.

This is a big challenge.

PROBLEM SOLVING & THINKING

Approaching problems – Thinking about business issues – Making Decisions

I utilize all that we have already discussed to approach problems.

I make sure that I create a “can do” working environment where I manage and lead.

I utilize everyone to gather information and motivate all staff to contribute to aggressive business growth using creativity.

I coordinate the working environment and training to accomplish this and to get employees to “take off their blinders and to think outside the box” and be more observant of what is going on around them.

I thoroughly understand the importance and power of a strong business relationship with customers for their business and to grow the company’s business as well.

Employees are critical with accomplishing this.

I use all of this, to approach problem solving and thinking about business issues.

A business and its leaders must be aggressive and on the look out to stay on the leading edge of all improvements and changes to their services and products in the market place.

Making decisions is something that everyone does in both their work and personal lives. Some of us just have a few more at work possibly.

We already discussed making decisions and problem solving in the above section of Leadership.

In addition to this though, it is important for all leaders to empower their staff to make decisions on things that they are individually responsible for.

You must not punish harshly for mistakes but everyone must learn from them, though. Mistakes can be avoided with aggressive continuing training and education, plus utilizing a team approach extensively.

A good leader wants employees to ‘stretch the envelope’ so to say, for growing the business even if there is some degree of risk.

If you are not stretching, you are not growing.

UNDERSTANDING OF SELF & OTHERS

Career aspirations – Receptiveness to feedback and change – Insights about leading others.

My career aspirations have led me up to director and vice president levels.

I have dedicated my 25 year business career to learning and refining all skills to business development where all business growth, profits, and business survival come from.

To accomplish this I have been willing and welcome to take on new positions, responsibilities and challenges constantly.

I have moved and relocated numerous times in this quest for self improvement.

I have advanced in business to high levels of responsibilities.

In this quest I have obtained skill sets in business development utilizing extensive skills of business, sales, sales management, marketing, marcom, strategic alliances, developing business relationships, utilizing operations affectively, quality improvement, and so much more.

Throughout my career I have traveled nationally and internationally learning business development.

In today's business environment, it is critical that leaders think outside the time zones.

I am now in the stage of my business career that I am in between some very important things and passions of mine.

I enjoy working as in a full time senior staff position utilizing my skills and experience to significantly contribute to a company's business growth.

This gives me the situation to practice what I have learned and it also provides an opportunity to keep up with the markets, changes and advancements as to what is working and what is not working with Business Development.

Consulting and project work is rewarding since this puts me in a position to help companies to grow significantly and fast, where normally they would be struggling to stay in business.

Teaching, training, and working in the educational world of colleges and universities is very rewarding to me since one of my passions in addition to business development is in teaching, and academics.

I enjoy sharing my skills, experience, insights, and knowledge with others.

I write a lot for numerous business publications currently and also have much of my knowledge loaded to the website.

I believe that the academic sector will partner with government programs to assist US businesses to grow and flourish in the new world business order.

I believe that my knowledge and skills will eventually be used here.

This is a different topic for later.

Maybe we can discuss this subject after we have completed these that you have requested.

Let's proceed on with the subjects that you have outlined.

Experience has proven to me that the good Fundamentals of Business Development is effective in all markets and industries, no matter of low tech, high tech, or no tech, no matter of what the products or services are.

Given a choice between the good fundamentals of Business Development Skills and technical product knowledge, I would take the business development skills any time

since product knowledge generally speaking, is far easier to learn and in significantly a shorter time frame.

Companies that have good product technical support and capabilities can easily support the staff with the good fundamental business development skills in so many ways that will keep ahead of competition both nationally and internationally, and grow the business substantially.

I have a passion for “Business Development”.

Business Development can be visually looked at like a big diamond with many facets or cuts in the diamond.

As you hold up a diamond to the light and turn ever so slowly, the facets can look a little different and the light can reflect a little different color through each facet or side.

Each facet or side needs to be precision cut and precision polished for the true beauty and the nature of the diamond to be seen when turning this diamond in the light.

This is the same with “Business Development”.

It needs extensive experience and training in many business disciplines to be effective.

Each business discipline is like a facet or side of a diamond.

Business development looks different when viewing thorough the various business disciplines.

I love to learn and to contribute to a company’s growth.

I love to share my skills and experience.

I appreciate the importance of continual training and education.

An attitude to seek out changes in the market place to stay on the leading edge of such is proving to be very important for both business development and business survival.

It is not easy to devote ones career to the noble cause and expertise of “Business Development”.

I have moved my family so many times for this quest.

I have spent over \$150,000. of my own personal money for education and training plus previous companies that I have worked for have invested at least another \$200,000. in me for such, as well. Significant results in sales and profits for them significantly paid them back.

It is always a sincere honor for me to share with others, lead others, and contribute to a company’s business growth.

I pride myself in constantly improving and aggressively looking to do such.

I hold to very high standards, the importance of utilizing employees' skills and capabilities; and utilizing a team approach for business development and operations improvement and efficiencies as well.

EMOTION & MOTIVATION

Personal quality values & motivators – Adapting to Change – Handling Pressure and Responsibilities

We have already discussed quality values and motivators and adapting to change but let's make a few more additional comments with this.

A significant indication of falling behind and not learning is lack of change. This applies to both individuals and businesses.

As to handling business and personal pressures, my years in business and personal maturity have taught me several important things.

1. One's physical and mental health is very important. Without it, you will not be any good for yourself, for family or friends, your co-workers, and definitely not good for your employer. This being, one needs to take care of one's physical and mental health. This is as important or even more important, than the handling of business pressures that a manager or leader may experience daily.
2. If one has children, you must balance your business and personal time to participate in your children's lives and hopefully help bring them up with good values and motivations that will help them in their own lives. Helping your children grow is just as important as helping your company to grow.
3. Do not take for granted people around you, the things they do, their importance, and the time that you may spend with them. When they are no longer around for whatever reason, this is not the time to think about their value and how you should have appreciated them a lot more. This certainly applies to both business and personal.
4. Being employed and earning an income is very important for a balanced life. For being employed, the key is to find a company that can utilize your skills, can personally grow with, plus contribute significantly to growing their business and making it successful. It is important to have personal pride in such and actively participate in making a company culture a positive one.
5. One must not allow pressures and responsibilities to interfere with any of this. Both business maturity and extensive training will help one to be successful in this area. This has certainly assisted me with this challenge of handling and managing pressures.
6. When an employee exhibits behavior and attitudes that reflect pressures interfering with business growth and a positive working environment, I highly recommend some specific training on this subject for them personally, in addition for management to get a thorough understanding of the situation to see what the company can do to help. Often such an approach will uncover significant

company improvements needed that can contribute to business growth which in turn will help relieve pressures.

7. Business pressures are often strong symptoms of serious business issues and problems needing attention for improvement.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share with you.

Michael P. Marshall, PhD

Michael has a PhD in Business, an MBA, BS in Psychology, and federally certified in International Business along with 25 years of experience in sales, marketing & business development starting as a field sales staff and advancing to Director and VP levels in marketing and sales.

Even though he is a practicing professional by working as a full time staff Director or Vice President of Sales, Marketing & Business Development, Michael does keep a limited consulting practice.

His website of www.AskTheBusinessDoctor.com offers important business information as well as business development consulting programs available.

His main focus of expertise is Business Development utilizing extensive skills and experience in marketing, sales management, and creativity / out of the box thinking for business development. Michael has considerable respect to the capabilities and power of professional independent sales agencies in helping companies develop significant business in both major and niche markets. He can be reached at 918-499-1970 as well on his website of www.AskTheBusinessDoctor.com