

# God – Senior Business Partner

*By Craig Cooper*

I believe that one of the greatest ways that God is going to move is at work and in our businesses. Why? This is where the nonbelievers are at. From time to time in this newsletter you will find articles about living your Christianity out in the workplace.

This article is sharing some insights I used years ago when I was a co-owner of a business that wrote custom software for corporations. When I owned that business I would ask God for insight on how to run the business. I would ask Him what He wanted to be done so that His will was done and the business was prosperous. Here are a few insights that He gave me.

It is a story about my journey in starting and running a business. It will be different than your story. But I hope that you will get some principles out of it that you can apply to your situation.

In 1996 I was working for as a computer programmer for one of the top 500 largest companies in the world.

It was a good job. But I wanted to make more money to help my family. So I decided to go out as an independent software contractor.

This involved more risk but potentially more money. This is a general truth in all of business. If you want the least risk - you will get the least reward. If you take the highest risk you have the opportunity to get the highest reward.

## PRINCIPLE #1 - To Obtain Wealth You Have to become an Owner

There are different ways to own. But the main idea is you have to get to the place where money works for you - you do not work for money.

For example, employees working for you when you are not, people paying rent on your buildings when you are not, investments paying you interest or dividends when you are asleep.

Definition of Wealth: I am not talking about being filthy rich. I am talking about having enough money coming in that you don't have to work if you don't want to. How long can you go without working? That is how wealthy you are?

Becoming a business owner does not guarantee that you will make more money than an employee. But it is the only door that you can go through that makes that opportunity possible.

My brother Brian was also a computer programmer. So we decided to quit a nice job with lots of benefits like health insurance and retirement plans and take a risk. We decided to become independent contractors selling our services to different companies. This was all I ever planned on doing.

But we got lots of requests for more work than we were personally able to do. This caused us to see there may be a business opportunity here. So we formed a partnership for a software company that sold custom computer programming to companies.

One note to business owners. Don't form 50/50 partnerships. They are trouble. We formed a 51/49% partnership. Somebody has to have the ability to make the final decision.

## PRINCIPLE #2 - Commit your Business to God

It was a strange idea, but I committed the business to God that He would be glorified.

Many people think God is only in the church. That He doesn't care about anything outside the church.

This was a new idea to me. Make God a Senior Partner? I didn't think God cared about those things. I knew that you asked God for advice about how to run a church. But not how to run a business.

The Lord can help you with everything in life. He wants to and is actually a very good business man. The book of Proverbs is full of things that you can use in business.

I said OK but you will have to teach me. The Lord said I will help you run your business if you will make me the Senior Partner. If you learn to do this you will have a good business.

We hired our first two employees six months later after going out on our own as independent contractors.

### PRINCIPLE #3 - Apply the Golden Rule with Your Employees. Treat Your Employees Like You Would Want to be Treated

I want to say that it does bring gold. The Lord said I want you to treat your employees good. Treat them like I treat you. You may say, "they are just employees!" He said no. They are people that are valuable and I want to show them my love through you. I said OK, I will try this. He said if you will treat your employees well then you will receive more business.

In the software business we didn't sell products like buildings or store items. We sold custom software that was written each time by an employee(s). Well it takes good people to write good software.

What happened is when we treated our people well they liked working for us and then they were happier and wrote better software. I didn't know this but God did. It is a principle that is true in all businesses.

The Lord even led us to give them some of the profits. If the company did good, they would be rewarded too. This is fairly common in America now but it was not then. So this caused the programmers to work even more.

The principle was this that I learned, you have to make money, but don't care about only money. If you will care about your people too then they will help you make money and not waste it.

What we found was that now many people wanted to work for us. We had the pick of the best programmers in the city. They were calling us for work. So the strategy the Lord gave us was a good one that helped us.

### PRINCIPLE #4 - The Lord Can Give You Business Strategies

After about a 1.5 year we got up to 8 employees. When you have 8 employees it gets to be a very expensive payroll. It was scary sometimes. I was constantly praying for strategies of how to keep the business full of work. With just 3 or 4 employees it was not as much a problem because word of mouth gave us business.

We needed another strategy and the Lord was faithful to give us one. If you ask the Lord He will give you answers to business problems. He knows it all.

In the software world there were 4 major ways of writing software. We would write in 2 or 3 of these ways. The Lord said if you will focus on just writing software for Microsoft you will do better in the end.

This was 7 or 8 years ago and Microsoft was not as big in business then as now. They were more into personal computers. We didn't write software for people but computers. So we researched the market and decided to do it.

We hit it just right. God's wisdom was good. We in the next 3 years grew to 20 people. We went from selling about \$100,000 of software per year to \$3,000,000 of sales after 5 years.

Have you heard about the story of George Washington Carver. It is the story of how God can give you new

strategies. George Carver was an American in the 1800's whose mother was sold to slave traders. He had to figure out how to make a living.

The land was bad from growing cotton for hundreds of years. People were realizing that the land would be good for peanuts, but people didn't know what to do with peanuts 150 years ago.

He cried out to God, "Mr. Creator, help me." He asked the question, "Why did you make the peanut." in frustration. The Lord gave him strategies over the next many years of 300 products from the peanut that he could sell - like peanut butter and peanut oil. He is considered one of the greatest inventors in our history.

#### PRINCIPLE #5 - Don't Compromise in Your Morals

With this type of growth was also a lot of stress to make the payroll every week. How many of you know there are legal ways to make money and illegal ways. There are also ways that are not illegal but also not quite right. Making sales calls became a full time job for me.

How many of you know you can sell anything if you will only give something back to the person you are buying from? Some of these things are OK like meals. Some of these things can be bigger like money for bribes or prostitutes or parties, etc.

In my business opportunities for giving to the customer wrong things would present themselves. Sometimes, when it looked like I would not make payroll it would be very tempting to do some of these things to get a sale. If I even thought about it, God would say, "you committed this business to Me. Do you think I would do that?" "No, Lord." "But how I am going to make payroll", I would ask?. Payroll was now \$100,000 a month.

The Lord would answer, "do what is right and in the end I will take care of you." I can tell you that we always made payroll and God was faithful. See God can make things happen when we can't.

#### PRINCIPLE #6 - Use the Golden Rule with Your Customers. Always give in Sales What you Would Want to be Sold

Many business people will see how much they can get out of their customers. We have to make money but if you cheat your customers they will eventually find out. This will cause you more business lost than is worth.

Realize that one satisfied customer will tell 1 other person. 1 dissatisfied customer will tell 7 others.

Your best advertising is word of mouth and a good reputation. Advertising is OK, but we never advertised. In America the best form of advertising only results in 3-4% sales. If it's a local business you will get most of your sales by treating customers with the golden rule too.

Give them the best service, give them the best product you can, treat your customers like you will be treated. It may cost you a little money now, but you will get it back in return sales.

The great department store Rich's in Atlanta (which is now a part of Macy's) grew because in the 1960's they were the first store to allow a no ask return policy! They treated their customers with the Golden Rule philosophy and were greatly blessed. Their policy is not standard at any store.

It worked for us too! We merged with a company in Atlanta that had a similar philosophy and became Microsoft North America Partner of the year for 2000 out of 26,000 companies.

Part of this is being honest and having integrity. If things weren't going good and the customer found out I would be honest with him. Customers can tell if you are lying, if not they will very soon. For instance, if we were behind I would tell them but would also say we will do our best to make up the time.

Several years ago a big survey was done of the Fortune 500 companies in America. It was asked, what is the number one thing you look for in top leaders in your company. Guess what the answer was? Not management

skills, not money skills, not ideas - Integrity! A man of his word.

Men who live by lying and cheating do not last long in business. People will eventually avoid them.

#### PRINCIPLE #7 - There is no Way to Get Rich Quick

You don't get wealthy or prosperous quickly. It is built by making lots of small decisions correctly over time. If you try to get rich quick you will only do something that you will regret over time.

Make being a good and Godly business owner a long term thing. In the end you will have a business and livelihood that you will be proud of. You will also give the glory to God because you know that He gave you so many creative ideas, endurance, and favor.