Humility and Hard Work

Written by Wade Myers

There is hope for the less-capitalized entrepreneur: there are countless businesses that can be started with very little money. But there is a catch. They do require a good dose of humility and hard work. And, while these businesses also require a few tools and supplies, they do not require any investment in manufacturing infrastructure or inventory that chews up working capital. These business models can still achieve significant leverage through employees; your ROI (return on investment) will be higher and faster due to the little to no up-front investment.

Consider the following real examples that should encourage those with nothing more than diligence and a humble heart to serve.

- A window cleaner who started with less than $100 in sponges, squeegees, rags and cleaning solution. His operation has since grown into a company that nets him a six-figure income, all while allowing him to work from home with his family.
- A pool cleaner who invested less than $200 in supplies to clean pools to put himself through seminary. He ended up hiring someone to manage the company after graduation, and it continued to bless him with income for over 30 years, freeing him up to pursue many church works that he otherwise could not have followed.
- Another pool cleaner who had lost everything in a failed real estate venture, but bounced back with humility and cheerful diligence. He moved to a new city with a high density of swimming pools, bought a few pool cleaning supplies and went door-to-door to build his customer base due to his lack of funds for a direct mail campaign. He went on to sell the company for $50,000 just ten weeks later.
- A hard-working immigrant who had only been in the U.S. for 18 months, having arrived from Eastern Europe with nothing more than the shirt on his back. In that short time, he had grown a heating and air conditioning vent cleaning company into three crews and average billings of $7,500 per day.

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- A window screen installer who worked with his young sons to build and replace window screens out of their van with billings up to $300 per hour. His investment was a slick little mobile screen cutting and framing machine he had picked up at Home Depot for a few hundred dollars. His supplies consisted only of rolls of window screen material and aluminum frame that he cut to measure onsite with a power hacksaw.

- A mobile dent puller who can make up to $400 per hour by cruising up-scale neighborhoods and offering to fix dents on the spot for less than half of what a typical body shop charges. His tools consist of two different types of dent pullers, two different styles of hammers and a drill. His supplies include putty and several grades of sand paper. (For the final painting, he refers customers to an auto paint store to pick up a small can of matching paint to finish the job themselves.)
- A home healthcare company run by a pastor and his family out of farm outbuildings converted into living quarters that earns them up to $12,000 per month to house and feed elderly clients. Their daughters do the cooking and cleaning and their sons trundle the meals to their clients in their peaceful little farm abodes while dad is freed up to shepherd his church. They are thrilled to be fulfilling a biblical mandate to care for widows, practice hospitality and provide for the family.
- A restaurant supply and repair entrepreneur who started with no money by offering to repair commercial kitchen equipment to customers who paid him in advance so he could buy the necessary parts. That business has since grown into a $40 million business with operations in several states. When asked about his success, he gives the glory to God, but his stories abound with tales of hard work in the early days of the business.

The list goes on and on including handyman, lawn mowing, cleaning services, etc., but there are consistent characteristics in these stories.

1 | They started with very little money

2 | They did not wait for customers to come to them, but went out and sold to them directly

3 | They started out performing the service themselves

4 | They did not have an MBA or any formal business training (in fact, that kind of training would likely have left them too prideful to start off as they did)

As I consider the many success stories of valuable business started for nearly nothing, I am certainly humbled as I recall my many high-flying business plans and the capital they called for. Shame on me for not being as resourceful, as diligent and as humble as the men profiled above. May God give us all grace as we labor in humility and hard work.

See Wade Myers' biographical information on page 24 of this book, or read more of his story at www.WadeTMyers.com.