The Widgeter's Shift

By Doug Ramer

What is a "widgeter" anyway? Is it even a word? A widgeter is what I call someone who builds things or provides services. Most of us start our careers as widgeters. We either work for ourselves or for someone else, providing widgets (products and/or services). Our internal compass says, "Go fast, work hard, and do your best." Our heritage also says, "Do it honestly and with integrity."

In the beginning, we find ourselves on the edge of our seats, leaning into our projects. We improve and refine processes, and before we know it, we have a Proverbs 22:29 situation: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men." I think this means that when we work tirelessly to perfect our product, there's no limit to whom we may serve. That brings us to the widgeter's shift.

The Shift

It begins one morning when the coffee seems to need an extra shot of espresso, and we're neck high in projects we don't know anything about. *Accounts Receivable, what?! You mean our customers haven't paid? Marketing, I didn't think about that angle. HR, wow, people are messy. And . . . hard swallow . . . we're paying that much for group medical coverage and payroll costs?!*

We didn't even notice when the shift began, but we're no longer doing what we love to do—building or providing widgets. Somewhere along the line our roles shifted from doing to managing. It's a role we would never have signed up for when we originally started doing the work. So why are we doing it?

To get everything done and still have enough spirit left for the family when we get home, we had no choice but to hire people to help us. Thus we become a leader of people rather than a manager of things. This is what I mean by the widgeter's shift.

We are now forced to think differently. We must change our thinking from "It's easier to just do it myself" to "My role is now hiring, training, and mentoring people." Yes, we soon find out that people and relationships are messy, but when we face each day knowing that working with people is exactly what God has placed in our path, the role can be fulfilling rather than fatiguing. It becomes purposeful and inspiring as we see lives being changed through our mentoring and discipling. Understanding the widgeter's shift means that if I take care of my people, they will take care of our customers.

> "***When I use what I have,*** *God always seems to send more my way.*

The Choice

Part of our stewardship includes knowing how to handle the growth of business that comes from using godly principles in our work. We could allow our stellar reputation to slowly degrade because we become too busy to serve our clients promptly. We could turn customers away so we can maintain our good reputation with our current customer base. Or we can hire more help and build our customer base with a reputation that honors Christ. Simply growing bigger isn't always the answer, although growth may give opportunity for helping someone start their own business and take part of the work you have. In that way you can bless the community.

As we ponder which choice is best for us, we must consider what happens when we stop using the things God has so graciously gifted to us. I've found that when I snooze, I lose. When I say no to anything He places in my path, opportunity flees. However, when I use what I have, God always seems to send more my way. This happens even when I'm not looking for more. I guess that's why they say in all this, when we are faithful stewards of what He gives, the Lord continues to give more responsibilities.[1]

On the other hand, if we decide not to use what He has set before us, God may decide more business is not for us. If we recognize this business is the Lord's, we would do well to do our best with what God has placed in our hands by praying for wisdom how He would want us to use it.[2]

> ***Your business is your mission field.*** *If I run my business as a mission field, I should want to mirror Christ to as many people as possible.*

The Purpose

If you're looking for even more clarity, consider this: Your business is your mission field. If I run my business as a mission field, I should want to mirror Christ to as many people as possible. The Lord can decide so much better than we how many people to place into our care!

God never really focused on widgets—money and things. He created all things for one purpose, to point the attention back to Himself. Both things and people were created to give Him glory, and most of all, He wants relationships. He loves relationships. So part of being like Christ means to love what He loves. He wants us to be the masters of good relationships and love our neighbors as ourselves. And that includes our employees.

Don't misunderstand me. I love the numbers. I am passionate about being at the top or close to it. Succeeding should be part of our business DNA. I still have the widgeter's drive, but somewhere along my career pathway, the widgeter's shift happened. Watching others succeed as a result of tireless mentoring and caring has become one of my greatest rewards. I believe we are strategically placed in business to mirror Christ to everyone, including our employees. As we do this, God gives us a passion for people and helping them grow.

The Call

As a business leader, I encourage you to take a mission trip. It may take you into territory you've never gone before, but be strong like Joshua and go anyway. Pick your quickest route and fastest mode of transportation and head into the office Monday morning to your mission field.

God has called you to this business and there's a lot of work to do. So what if you haven't been commissioned by the mission board in a special service? Maybe every business leader should be anointed in a special service and commissioned by the "Christian Business Community Board" to answer the call to their mission field.

Jesus walked, talked, mingled, and taught as He spent His time here on earth. If we model the actions of Christ in our business, we can shift from widget-making to showing others how—from *doing* to *leading*. We'll

[1] Luke 16:10 "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

[2] James 1:5 "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

become servant leaders who walk, talk, mingle, mentor, and disciple.

As Christian leaders, we must embrace our business as our mission field. God will determine how well we are doing and what to do with our business. He's better at that than we are!

Make the widgeter's shift, and you will find God's greatest purpose for life.

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