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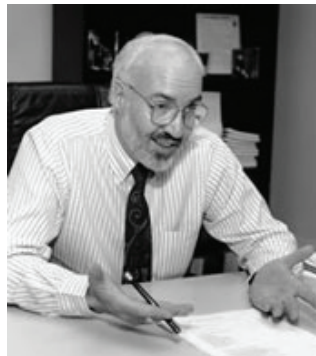
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No-Compromise Leadership

by **Bill Doerr**
Sales & Marketing Editor

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15 Second Executive Summary

No-Compromise Leadership or 'NCL' is a pragmatic approach to building a business by design, not accident.

Created by Neil Ducoff, a seasoned and accomplished veteran of entrepreneurial adventures, NCL is a true tool that fosters amazing growth in a business and personal growth for those who must lead and work in it.

If sales and marketing produce relationships and revenues, and NCL supports those same outcomes in a business, it's a relevant topic to understand intimately and, more importantly, use actively in your business.

Who's behind 'No-Compromise Leadership'

I recently met with Neil Ducoff at a talk he gave on this topic. Neil is the founder and CEO of Strategies, Inc., a business training and coaching company. A fellow entrepreneur, he mentors business leaders who can grow sales and profits, turn customers into raving fans, and engage employees as evangelists of their company to the markets they serve.

He has a *demonstrated* track record for achieving cultural transformation, changing paradigms and the metrics for success in a changing world.

In addition to dedicating more than 30 years to coaching leaders at companies, like Aveda, Matrix and Profound Beauty to success, for the past three years, Ducoff has been a featured speaker at the annual National Gathering of Games conference, presented by Jack Stack's The Great Game of Business. Ducoff was honored as a "business icon" at the annual Serious Business: Legends & Icons conference in 2006 and was the recipient of the 2005 Art of Business Award. He is also the author of *Fast Forward*, the definitive business and leadership resource guide for the salon, spa and resort spa industries.

I wanted to establish Neil's credentials early in this article because I don't want you, my dear reader, to miss the true significance of what NCL is and can mean for *your* business.

No-Compromise Leadership . . . the beginnings

Like one of Shakespeare's characters, Ducoff assumes the mantle of responsibility for whatever state his business is in – created by his own hand, of course. And if he finds the situation is unacceptable (i.e.

not as successful as he expects) then Neil, like Hamlet seeks to ‘take arms against a sea of troubles and, by opposing, end them’.

His opposition to mediocrity is reflected in what he calls “No-Compromise Leadership”. In the end, NCL is simply an all-out commitment to honor what is important to a business that can succeed and to the leader of it who takes his own inner journey to make that happen.

Neil’s own journey has included many a ‘dark night of the soul’. Shortly after starting his company (Strategies, Inc.) in 1991 he bought a small printing company. It was the start of a journey not unlike the Titanic’s epic voyage. Like Titanic, it also ended badly. Neil’s life both personally and commercially was literally ‘on the rocks’ and resolving the mess each had become was both difficult and painful. But Neil persevered. He rebuilt. Both himself and his business. Today, both are better for that ‘near hit’ episode.

Known for creating ‘Neilisms’ – I would offer him one of my own here: “As long as you stay in the game, you can still get on the scoreboard”. Neil’s tenacious commitment to ‘stay in the game’ has afforded him the opportunity to not only find his own path, but to help you improve yours, as well.

I sincerely hope you appreciate the ‘gems’ he shared with me so I can share them with you.

The Consequences . . . of Compromise Leadership

Allowing *compromise* into your company is akin to injecting yourself with a nasty virus. If it doesn’t kill you, it certainly won’t help you feel good. About yourself. About your business.

“Compromise . . . like no-compromise . . . is a CHOICE!”. Either way, it reflects a decision on your part to either honor (or, dishonor) the value that help you differentiate your business from the competition by enabling (or, disabling) the attitude and behaviors that support success.

And ‘success’ isn’t measured in purely financial terms. Neil reminds us that there are many aspects of success, “. . . pride, a sense of accomplishment, loyalty, respect, and personal growth are just some of the equally valid and rewarding metrics of being successful in your business.”

How do you know if you've allowed compromise into your business? "If I am a physician, you look for the symptoms . . .". These would include:

- having different standards for yourself and your staff
- procrastinating
- ignoring problems with your people or numbers when you notice them
- talking a good talk but not walking your talk
- doing anything that tears down rather than builds up your people

The list goes on but you get the idea – compromise is a disease of choice making poor choices when you have options (and, you always do!) that will either help or hurt your business success.



No-Compromise Leadership . . . It's About Your Relationship

The obvious benefit of NCL is . . . success. Yours. Using any of the myriad metrics you like.

Duoff suggests a business is, “. . . a living entity whose vital signs are reflected in its balance sheet and income statement”. In that sense, as business leaders, we are like a parent to our businesses. We give them birth and raise them to maturity.

Thus, the NCL approach exhorts you to honor your relationships with yourself, your employees and your customers as a parent would honor, a fiduciary, the trust implicit in those relationships. By not making choices in your business that compromise your success, you enable choices that will cause it. It's that simple.

The Big Four . . . Business Outcomes

I'm a pilot. Years ago, when I got into my first cockpit, I was overwhelmed. "All these gauges!" I thought to myself. Later, I learned there are only a few key ones – airspeed and altitude being among them – that you need to have your eyes on most of the time.

Neil brings a similar and refreshing clarity to the metrics of success . . . reflecting a commitment to No-Compromise Leadership -- in your business. In fact, he suggests the following are the key metrics you want to keep your eye on:

1. Productivity
2. Profitability
3. Retention . . . of your employees
4. Loyalty . . . of your customers

Each is symptomatic of making No-Compromise leadership an integral part of your business. If you do, these measures will be pleasing to you; if you don't, they won't be. Again, simple.

The Big Eight . . . Drivers of Your Business Outcomes

If the consequences of NCL are the four outcomes above, Ducoff explains there are eight causes or 'drivers' for them:

1. Culture . . . the collective behavior of your company
2. Urgency . . . the energy driving performance and growth
3. Critical Numbers . . . indicators of strength or weakness
4. Information . . . a key to keeping everyone focused on SWOT
5. Teamwork . . . the reason big things happen
6. Innovation . . . getting things done . . . better, easier, faster
7. Systems . . . procedures and structure that produce the results you expect
8. Accountability . . . commitment to do 'whatever' it takes to achieve success

The No-Compromise Future – Make it Yours

In preparing this article, I reviewed what Neil had shared with me. What stands out in my mind are not his lists of business outcomes or drivers of NCL tenets. It is his *passion* for helping people like you and me find a practical, do-able and sustainable way to succeed in business.

Neil is, above all else, a coach. A mentor. He's a role-model of what he believes. He's authentic. He's remark-able. He's got congruity *and* integrity. He walks his talk.

If we do that, we build value for ourselves, our employees and our customers / clients. Really now, isn't that the best way to honor the relationships that are the foundation of our success?

In case you're wondering, Neil's got a book coming out called (what else) **No-Compromise Leadership**. In it he expands on his unique approach to building a successful business and, in the process, achieving a meaningful personal growth for yourself. That's pretty good. So is Neil Ducoff. Get the book . . . you'll find yourself challenged to implement his advice – not because it's difficult . . . but because so few of us are 'wired' to do the things that make things happen. Become one of the few who do . . . that's Neil's real gift to you.

Neil Ducoff is the founder and CEO of Strategies, a business training and coaching company. During his 38 years as a business trainer, coach, keynote speaker and author, he has authored several books including *Fast Forward*, the definitive business resource book for salons and spas. His new book, *No-Compromise Leadership*, is published by DC Press and is available through Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble and Borders October 1, 2008. For more information, visit: www.nocompromiseleadership.com.

Bill Doerr, CCO of SellMore Marketing, LLC is the creator of The Prospecting System™,

The Expert Directory™, The Client Machine™ and The Ultimate Client Development System™.

He is an Authorized Duct Tape Marketing Coach and a licensed facilitator of the Get Clients NOW! program.

Bill uses these resources to help service providers generate more awareness in their marketing area, interest in their services, and revenues in their business. You can reach Bill by phone at: 860-798-6964, online: www.getnewclientsnow.com by email: