

# Commentary **Mark Richardson**

## Passion Plays

Find what gets you really fired up and the enthusiasm will be contagious.

About every two weeks, we host a day-long event called “Discovery Day” at my company. It’s designed as a time to share with prospective partners and other companies with whom we have or are contemplating forming an alliance, our insights on the industry and consumer trends, and to explain how our products and services are formulated into a business model.

Over dinner at the conclusion of each event, I like to get feedback on the experience by asking our guests what they considered to be the highlight of the day. Nine times out of 10, the answer is something like this: “It’s the passion and enthusiasm of your team. They each feel that their piece of the recipe for success — whether it’s

sales, marketing, technology, recruitment, and so on — is the most important.”

### KEY COMPONENT

After hearing this so many times, I have made “passion” a key component of what we look for in ourselves and our team. It all begins with you — the leader of your organization. Before you can inspire passion in others, you need to

identify what it is that gets you fired up and your blood flowing.

As a masterful salesperson, for example, you may be fixated on the “hunt” — the sales strategy — or on the emotional high you feel when you close the deal. Because you can’t wait to get to the next sale, it’s hard for you to focus on all the back-office paperwork.

Or it may be that, like many remodelers, you got into this business because of your passion for the craft. Do you still feel the pride and the joy that come from a well-crafted product? Is it a work of art to you or just a product that fulfills your client’s specs?

Or maybe it’s the numbers that get you going. Numbers are important to every remodeling business, but some people get

more satisfaction out of working with the spreadsheets and ratios than with the profit or the projects the numbers are illustrating.

Your passion may be something obvious or it may be something you need help from a coach or consultant to find. You may even discover that the thing in your business that you’re passionate about has changed over time. When I first started out in this business in the late ’70s, my passion was design. Soon, however, it became serving the client. Then, it changed to growing a design-sales team, and finally, to leading growth for the overall business.

### FOCUS ON THE PRIZE

The next step is to make sure you’re able to spend time and energy on the things you’re passionate about. It’s easy to be overwhelmed by all of our responsibilities, but you’ll be a much more effective leader if you focus your energy on those parts of your business that fuel your passion and avoid those that pull you down or take away from your excitement. By following your passion, you will fuel the kind of growth that creates new opportunities for everyone in your company.

### PASS IT ON

What about those aspects of the business that you’re less passionate about? If you’ve set a good example and encourage everyone on your team to find their own sweet spot, you’ll discover that the excitement is contagious. As employees discover their own passion, they start to apply it to every aspect of your business. People who love what they are doing not only master their jobs sooner, they exceed customer expectations and constantly strive to move to the next level.

Finding and fueling the passion in your company is a formula that will not only help keep you excited about your business but will help motivate and retain key team members. Life is too short not to love what you do and be around people who also love what they do. —*Mark Richardson is president of Case Design/Remodeling and Case Handyman Services, Bethesda, Md., and the author of 30-Day Remodeling Fitness Program. He can be reached at 301.229.4600 or mrichardson@casedesign.com.*



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