

Success: Leverage and Grind

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It was almost 30 years to the day since I had first met my lunch partner, when his new psychological consulting firm hired me as a typist. He fired me two years later. Now we sat, Ph.D. to Ph.D., author to author, consultant to consultant, and I complimented him on his worldwide achievements.

“I’m sure people look enviously at your success,” I told him, “but I’ve never known anyone who’s made money who didn’t feel they earned every single dollar.”

“You’re right, Rosie,” he said. “There’s nothing glamorous about becoming successful. It’s a grind, day in and day out, and you have to be willing to do that grind, whether you feel like it or not.” After lunch we toured his plush office whose boardroom walls held illustrations of ideas spun from a book he had written 25 years earlier.

“Did you ever imagine when you wrote the first book how much would spring from the management model you created?” I asked.

“Never,” he said, “but you have to leverage what you know, and that’s what I did.” Leverage. What he meant was: “Drain every drop of opportunity from it.”

Grind and leverage may be the keys to consulting success. The field attracts what one colleague called *luftmenschen*, literally “air men.” Those happy creatives who love ideas but whose feet never quite touch the ground of application, implementation, repetition; heavy, draggy work doesn’t appeal; making the marketing calls, getting the proposal out. It’s called “grind” because it is.

Leverage means to give up the exciting notion of creating something new for the new client, but simply work the heck out of the same idea again and again. It’s kind of like making beer. The product is basically the same. Leverage is tweaking with the flavor and selling it in different ways. Leveraging an idea sends you deeper, forces you to mine what’s there, to make the most of one great idea instead of constantly chasing new ones.

Of course you need ideas and change and new challenges in order to stay excited about your business and fresh in the marketplace. But you have to have bedrock, like my former employer did, something foundational, that will give your business strength and long-term success because you were willing to leverage and grind.

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