

What I learned at summer camp

By: Veronica Cool | August 28, 2015



Cool Tips

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Swimming in a bucolic lake, rustic log cabins, fresh mountain air, trapeze acrobatics, bubble soccer and silent disco. Throw in world renowned speakers and uber-successful entrepreneurs and, yup, this is summer camp for entrepreneurs!

There is nothing like freeing yourself from the daily routine and having good ol' fashioned fun. But even more powerful was the networking and access granted into a new sphere of thinkers.

As I sat around the lake, connecting with these innovators, learning more about how these fearless beings just plunged ahead into the abyss of business and opportunity and found success – or rather CARVED success out of their journey. They live life wholeheartedly with gusto. They allowed room for experimentation and subsequent failure but never without lessons learned.

Like most of you, I have financial responsibilities to my family, employees and myself, and I typically act very cautiously, carefully assessing risks at every turn.

Summer camp delivered new lessons and some refreshers, reminding me of some valuable tenants to live by as an entrepreneur. Actually, they were tenants to live by as a person.

1. Vivid vision – This brilliant nugget came from one of our esteemed camp counselors, Cameron Herold, best known for taking 1-800-Got Junk from \$2 million to over \$106 million in just six years.

"The goal of doubling your company's size in three years is easy to accept," he said. "Who wouldn't want to do that? But accepting this goal and realizing it are two different things. To achieve it, you need to prepare for fast growth. And to do that, you need to develop a detailed vision of the future... Everyone in your organization must focus on the same Vivid Vision, and that Vivid Vision must be in sharp focus."

Create your vision and present it to your team on a quarterly basis. That way, everyone on the team is striving toward the same work.

2. Bucket list fun – We run the risk of burning out by maintaining our intensive, crazy schedules. Creating our bucket list and including wondrous, far-fetched activities is a reward for hard work but also a carrot to continue our efforts.

And by “bucket list,” I mean far-out, outrageous items, such as “I want to go into space.” (Remember: Virgin Galactic is still selling tickets.) Trapeze acrobatics? Machu Picchu? Paragliding in the Alps? Camping in the Amazon? Your imagination is your slate. Think HUGE.

3. Authentic and engaged listening – The group was small and intimate, approximate 100 folks, diverse in almost every way and from all walks of life. Every conversation was like opening a present, intriguing, inspiring and encouraging. I have 100 new BFFs.

4. Explore and take risks – This theme surfaced repeatedly during our dealings. Just do it. Figure it out as you go along. You have value and expertise. As struggles or obstacles surface, tweak your processes and rectify the problems – and keep driving forward full-throttle!

5. Learn and be open to learning – I’m fluent in various languages, including Spanish, English and Teenage Girl. But sales funnels, PPC, opt-in and algorithms are foreign concepts. I realized immediately I needed a crash course in these concepts. After all, if we don’t perpetually learn, we become stagnant.

6. Know yourself and hire to supplement – My fellow campers knew their strengths and could easily play off them. They could rattle off their Myers Briggs and Kolbe scores and could hire employees and engage key partners to complement one another. Another great reminder that innovative technology is coming together with psychology and talent management to ensure folks live up to their best self. (My Kolbe, by the way is 7382.)

7. Evolved enterprise – The camp was the brainchild of Yanik Silver, a modern-day renaissance man. It’s the manifestation of his “Evolved Enterprise” concept, which will be featured in his long-awaited book later this year titled “Evolved Enterprise: How to Re-Think, Re-Imagine and Re-invent Your Business to Deliver Meaningful Impact and Even Greater Profits.” In the book, Silver discusses how to shift your company from simply transactional to truly transforming and even transcending business and introduces a counterintuitive blueprint for delivering an exceptional customer experience, team alignment, “baked-in” impact and even an increased bottom line.

BUY THE BOOK! And read it, obviously. Silver has surrounded himself with bright, pioneering mavericks that are changing the world in a sustainable way. I’m thrilled to be involved and eagerly await the next adventure.

Maybe you are not an entrepreneur, but remember that you have influence and power in your own way. That’s why you need to continually develop and learn, to place yourself in situations for advancement and deeper relationships. And by advancement, I mean holistic advancement of your personal and professional selves.

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