

# The physics of business

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If I have a group of students who are junior to middle-level corporate employees, then I sometimes warn them not to speak out, because corporations have hierarchies, and you can do harm to your career if you don't respect them.

**And what about your advice for corporate executives? What is that like**

That is normally the same as what I would do myself. The only

difference is that in some areas I see that they have a limited ability to implement it, and, in such instances, I will say so openly; few people like that.

**How does the consulting business in Russia differ from the consulting business in Western Europe?**

The main difference is that this process is much less developed here than it is in the West. Another difference is in who the client is. In the West, the client is generally a corporate manager

with a budget and strategy and with an idea as to why they are hiring a consultant.

In contrast, in most small and medium-sized companies in Russia, the manager and the owner are one and the same person. As a result, to a certain extent, you can say that there is not the conflict of interests you have where what the manager does is not in the interest of the owner.

However, in the majority of cases, these owners think they

know the right way to go about things. To them, it seems unnatural to hire someone to help them solve certain problems. They say, "I have achieved this; how can an outsider know more about our problems than us?"

**How important is a personalized approach in carrying out consulting work?**

I would say that this is the most important thing in my business. A consultant's job is to solve someone else's problems and to take them on as if they were their own. A personalized service also helps build trust faster.

**What gives you most job satisfaction?**

There are several things that do this. One is when students not only like what you say, but want to come back and recommend you to their peers. Another is knowing that you are doing what people need. And something else is when you actually see a project become reality after having provided financial recommendations.

I remember when the plant owned by one of my first clients, who produces ceramic tiles was finally built; I was filled with pride when I visited it and touched it.

**Do you think life experience out of the workplace can have a greater effect on a person's career than what actually happens to them at work?**

I've had a lot of influences like that in my life, and one of them was my piano teacher, who unfortunately died five years ago.

He was very different from me; he was a man of art, not business. But he had a very special kind of professionalism; he would sometimes chase his students with a hammer and threaten to whack off their left hand!

He was absolutely committed to whatever he did, whether it was piano teaching, mountaineering, or skiing. He was like

a match that burns, but never burns out.

I was a physics student at the time, but it was not until I began to work with people myself that I realized his influence on me.

**How applicable is your physics education to what you are doing now?**

It is very applicable. Studying science shapes your mind in a special way; it makes you think very logically. I would probably not be a good physicist from an emotional point of view, but we did not have private entrepreneurship then. I was good at math, so it was a natural choice for me.

Physics gives you the ability to think more deeply, like a researcher. Being a physicist helps me understand how to structure things and gives me the ability to explain complex things in a very simple way.

**How important is an understanding of psychology in consultancy?**

I would say that it is definitely important, although not the most important thing. You can please your client, you can really understand what he needs, but that is not enough to achieve a result that will mean a positive change in his company.

Psychology is probably important in winning the contract and in winning trust, but at the end of the day, for most people, trust is based on solid results.

Communication skills are also important for teaching; but only to a certain extent. Yes, the way you deliver is important, but if people walk out of your class without some solid knowledge, then it is largely a waste of their time and money.

When people buy something, they want to get something in return. Consulting is not just speaking; it's about how to make their companies more valuable and about how to make people more successful. If you succeed in doing this, then you can be certain your clients will return. ■



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