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## The Job Market is Tough, But Sometimes, Failure is a Choice

By Dr. Woody

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The September jobs report last Friday was pretty grim.

With the economy losing another 95,000 jobs it's no wonder job seekers are losing hope and small businesses continue to struggle.

That being said, there are times when I think the bad economy has become a bit of a crutch for those who just don't want to succeed.

The other day, I happened to walk by a local café that had just closed its doors for good.

Only about a year old, the stylish and well located venue had a great promise. Nestled in a new apartment building only one block away from six major residential towers and several office buildings, I thought for sure they would make it... that is, until I actually dined there.

The place was typically messy, the service was slow, and the menu didn't make a lot of sense. Not to mention the fact that the four young owners spent more time socializing and drinking wine than actually paying attention to customers.

Countless times I would walk in and see the four owners standing around playing with the iPod system or reading a magazine. All the while, I'd be sitting across from unclean tables waiting for the lone waitress to finally notice me. Their business steadily died off each week as it became clear that the owners were not engaged.

Needless to say, I wasn't surprised at the closure. Sadly, when I asked why they had to shut their doors, one of the owners responded with, "it's the economy."

Really? The economy is to blame? I hate to say it, but this is a classic case of four individuals not taking charge of their own careers. By choosing themselves over their customers they chose to fail.

Every recession has its shining stars and there are always opportunities. Stars are the ones who took charge of their careers and genuinely committed themselves to being successful. Whether you are a business owner, manager, or individual contributor, failure is often a choice.

Here are some tips for avoiding the trap of unwittingly making the choice to fail.

### Know Your Purpose

A friend of mine was recently on a tour of the new Dallas Cowboys stadium when the tour guide posed this question: What do you think our business is? Those that answered football were wrong. The answer is entertainment.

The business of football is not about sport--it's about entertainment. Without fans you have no revenue and without revenue, you have no football. The NFL knows their purpose.

In the case of the failed restaurateurs, their business was delivering a positive dining experience, a purpose they failed to understand. Always know your purpose and understand the expectations of those you serve.

### Pay Attention and Get Feedback



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In a world where communication is now defined by sound bites and character limits, the idea of actually focusing on any one facet of life for more than a few seconds can be a challenge.

Nonetheless, if you want to demonstrate your value you have to pay attention to what's going on around you.

Always be mindful of how your customers are responding. In my restaurant example, they were more interested in themselves than those they were supposed to be serving. Always seek out feedback and don't be shy about asking your boss or customers how you are doing. Don't be afraid to find out what's working and what's not. We all have blind spots, which is why you can't wait for people to come to you with feedback, you need to go to them.

### **Always Bring Your A-Game**

A mentor of mine once told me that the mark of a true professional is someone who always gives their best performance, regardless of the circumstances. Whether it's a bright sunny day or 45 degrees and pouring rain, star athletes always walk onto the field with the same mindset, winning. Just because you are having a bad day doesn't mean you should ruin someone else's by delivering bad service. I never saw my restaurant friends really give serious effort, which is part of why they failed. If you aren't planning on bringing you're A-game, then don't bother showing up. If you want to stand out in tough times, you always need to outperform.

Times are tough. There is no doubt about it. Consumer sentiment is faltering and hope is hard to come by. However, it's not an excuse to fail. The best way to avoid being a victim is to know your purpose, pay attention to what you are doing, and always bring you're a-game.

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