

COMIC RELIEF

AT THE TOP OF YOUR GAME? TAKE THIS ADVICE FROM JERRY SEINFELD.



Like you, I've read dozens of business books (and magazines like this one), dozens of marketing books, dozens of management books. I've been to and led seminars, retreats and workshops. I've listened to leadership MP3s, CDs and tapes (yes, I'm that old). And yet I learned one of the best business lessons of my life from Jerry Seinfeld.

It happened when I was the executive producer of Seattle's long-running comedy TV show, *Almost Live!* Jerry was on our show four times. By the time of his final appearance, his groundbreaking sitcom, *Seinfeld*, was already on the air. It had not yet become the monster hit it would eventually become — the show that *TV Guide* would name the “greatest television program of all time” (clearly *TV Guide* was not aware of *Almost Live!*) — but it was obvious that it was heading in that direction.

On Jerry's fourth and final appearance on *Almost Live!*, he did a routine about how a washing machine is like a disco for clothes. It's a routine I'd seen him do before, but somehow it seemed better this time. I couldn't put my finger on it, so I asked Jerry about this sketch in the green room after the show. Here's what he told me:

“I'm glad you noticed that. I was doing a gig a couple of months ago in Kansas City [Author's note: I don't remember where his actual gig was. I just said Kansas City because it sounds generic — and, in fact, is generic, which you'd know if you've ever been to Kansas City] and I had the set videotaped. When I watched the tape, I realized that I was pretty much just standing there. I mean, visually, it was pretty boring. I wondered if there was something I could do to pick it up a bit. So I've been trying to add a little more motion, a little more physicality, to the routine. You think it worked?”

Well, it certainly did work, but here's the thing: *It was already working!* Think about this. Here's Jerry Seinfeld — Jerry Seinfeld — at the time the hottest comedian around. He's playing to standing-room-only crowds nightly and he's *killing* it. His TV show is about to enter legendary status. Here's a guy who's at the top of his game and his stuff is working.

And he's looking for ways to make it better.

Here's my takeaway from that little episode. If Jerry Seinfeld at the top of his game is still looking for ways to make it better, then what's our excuse? I mean, here's a guy who could have coasted. Here's a guy who could have thought, “I've got a winning game and everybody knows you don't change a winning game.”

What Jerry Seinfeld taught me is that you *do* change a winning game. In fact, you *must* change a winning game. You have to keep looking for ways to make it better. Because if you don't, you can bet the competition will.

WHAT JERRY SEINFELD TAUGHT ME IS THAT YOU DO CHANGE A WINNING GAME. IN FACT, YOU MUST CHANGE A WINNING GAME. YOU HAVE TO KEEP LOOKING FOR WAYS TO MAKE IT BETTER. BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T, YOU CAN BET THE COMPETITION WILL.

Success, as it turns out — and as Jerry Seinfeld realized — is a moving target. It doesn't stay in the same place. Author and actress Carrie Fisher once said, “There is no point at which you can say, ‘Well, I'm successful now. I might as well take a nap.’”

I don't know what business you're in. But here's one thing I do know: It's not standing still. It's being affected by factors both internal and external.

Success in your business is a moving target.

Whatever you're doing in your business right now might be working just fine. You might even be at the top of your game. If that's the case, congratulations. You've no doubt put in a lot of hard work to get to where you are. As did Jerry Seinfeld. So here's my question for you: How can you make it better?

*For 15 years, Executive Producer Bill Stainton led his team to more than 100 Emmy® Awards and 10 straight years of #1 ratings. Today Bill helps leaders achieve those kinds of results—in **their** world and with **their** teams.*

For booking inquiries, please contact Jeff Jacob at Jeff@BillStainton.com, or call 615-974-0225.