

I remember the time well. I was 27 years old.

I finally had my own apartment for the first time. I still hadn't bought a new car yet, but I was jazzed that I had a 4 year old Mazda RX 7. 4 Years old was as good as new to me, and driving a gold RX 7 back in the day was fun as well.

I still bought my suits used, although by then I did have 1 new suit I had bought at Neiman Marcus because my girlfriend worked there and brought me to one of their year end employee discount deals.

My business, MicroSolutions was about 3 years old and I would make 60k dollars that year. HUGE money for me. Back then, getting paid your age was good, double your age was great. Around Christmas of that year, after many welcome hints from my then girlfriend, I decided to take every penny I had in my savings, \$ 7,500 dollars and get engaged.

It was a beautiful ring that cost me exactly \$ 7,500 dollars.

Long story short. I got engaged. She lost the ring a couple weeks after I gave it to her and before it was insured. We broke up. (the good news is that I was too young to get married and we are still good friends).

27 years old. Zero in the bank. Messed up in the head because of the breakup. The good news was that I had my business. The one thing that I could always focus on to the exclusion of everything else. A trait that would serve me well in business, but had more than a little bit to do with my breakup.

MicroSolutions was growing. But it could be doing better. The PC industry had gone through a major slump and pullback and the local area networking industry had yet to take off. If we were going to grow, it was going to take working hard and working smart.

It was right around then I heard something that I would hear a lot once I bought the Mavs.

In sports, the only thing a player or coach can truly control is effort. The same applies to business. The only thing any entrepreneur, salesperson or anyone in any position can control is their effort.

I had to kick myself in the ass and recommit to getting up early, staying up late and consuming everything I possibly could to get an edge. I had to commit to making the effort to be as productive as I possibly could. It meant making sure that every hour of the day that I could contact a customer was selling time and when customers were sleeping, I was doing things that prepared me to make more sales and to make my company better.

And finally, I had to make sure I wasn't lying to myself about how hard I was working. It would have been easy to judge effort by how many hours a day passed by while I was at work. That's the worst way to measure effort. Effort is measured by setting goals and getting results. What did i need to do to close this account. What did I need to do to win this segment of business. What did i need to do to understand this technology or that business better than anyone. What did I need to do to find an edge. Where does that edge come from and how was I going to get there.

The one thing in our business lives is effort. Either you make the commitment to get results or your don't.