

Mar 18th 2006 12:41AM

I learned a lot from Don Nelson when he was coach and GM of the Mavericks. He told me something early on, that opened my eyes. I forget the exact conversation, but we were talking about players, and I asked him why he didnt talk to a specific player about something that was going on. What he said was that "The worse evaluator of talent is a player trying to evaluate himself."

The same applies to business people and particularly to entrepreneurs and want to be entrepreneurs. We tend to be less than honest with ourselves about our strengths and weaknesses.

I have been just as bad at this as anyone, particularly when I was getting started in the business world. For those of us who dream of starting and running a business, we know that we have to have a level of confidence in our own abilities. We dont want to believe that there are things we cant do. We want to believe that if we try hard enough, work long enough, and get a little lucky, that the sky is the limit. The problem is that we let our confidence cloud our judgements of what we truly know about ourselves.

Im one of the least organized people I know. Today, i have an assistant and others that help me run my life. If you ask me where Im going to be in 3 days. I have no idea. I do know that i have a kick ass assistant who is going to make sure that when i wake up that morning, I know where Im going and how to get there.

When i was 23 years old, sleeping on the floor and starting MicroSolutions, no assistant. No organization. I was a procrastinator. Accounting was a shoebox of receipts. I was a mess.

But I lied to myself and said that I could deal with it. That i would make time to get it all figured out and organized. That if I only set my mind to it, I could be a detail person. I could stop procrastinating. It doesnt work that way.

I did the things I was good at. I could sell. So I sold. I could write software programs. I could integrate PCs. I could set up local area networks. And I did. My business grew. But it also grew out of control A local area network or a software program without documentation is a disaster waiting to happen. And they did. Not to the point where it killed my business, but to the point where I spent far too much time fixing things rather than selling new deals.

Fortunately, one of my best customers at the time was interested in becoming a partner in my business. Martin Woodall ran a company called Hytec Data Systems. He was not only smart and a good programmer, but he was the most anal, detail oriented person I had ever met in my life. The perfect partner for me.

Our partnership wasnt always easy. We had more than our shares of knock down drag out fights. He of course would want everything done with precision and if lack of perfection was an option, he didnt want to do it. I of course was the exact opposite. I was the GO FOR IT guy. We can sort it out after the fact. We were perfect partners. We knew and trusted the skills of the other and although many might not think yelling was the best way to work things out, we managed.

It all came down to choice. I had the choice between lying to myself and pretending that I could turn on a switch and become a details person, or accepting the fact that Im not, and partnering with someone who is. Continuing to lie meant I would probably lose my business.

Every entrepreneur faces comparable choices. Each of us has to face the reality of who we are and what we are.

What choice will you make ?