



Dave LaRue

Dave LaRue believes you should write your goals in pencil.

As an entrepreneurial coach and the owner of a worldwide industrial distribution company, he knows the value of staying flexible and constantly learning new things.

Dave is one of those people born with a mind for business. “I just understand what it is,” he says, “and it’s fun to understand that.” He describes his main organization, Baldwin Supply, as selling “anything that moves.” This includes parts and motors for the four major types of machines—mechanical, electrical, pneumatic, and hydraulic—and servicing these machines as well.

At a time when his entire industry is in a downturn, Dave’s company is still profitable. He attributes this to the way he and his team have been able to differentiate the business using Strategic Coach® concepts and tools. “Having that,” he says, “we’ve been able to adapt, make decisions, and thrive in this economy.” He readily admits there are challenges, but any challenges the business has experienced are far smaller than the debilitating setbacks his competition is suffering. And the company is still on track to be ten times bigger than when he originally bought it.

Back then, things were quite different. The company was smaller, and although it was successful and competitive, Dave wanted to make it grow. But he wasn’t sure what direction to go in, and kept bumping into personal limitations. “I knew I was a good leader, but the harder I tried at managing, the worse I was. As a leader and a business owner, you always feel like you have to have the answers to everything. You think it’s



stupid to admit to anybody that you're really bad at managing because that would be a weakness, and you'd be taken advantage of."

He had a sense there was another way to do things, but he didn't know how. The breakthrough came when a friend gave him a cassette of Dan Sullivan speaking. "I was at that stage where I was the entrepreneur, the owner of the company, and I was working all the time. I knew I was missing something. I'd gone to time-management and other types of seminars, and had always been a goal-setter, but was missing something that would put it all together. After I listened to Dan's talk, I thought, 'Yeah, this is it.'"

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"One of my goals is to always be learning and growing. What better place to do that, both personally and professionally, than here? I haven't found anything better. But, truthfully, I haven't looked for anything better because — why? I've found it. Why waste my time looking? I'm here. Even if I wasn't a coach, I'd still be here."

The Program helped Dave admit there were certain things he wasn't good at, and to restructure his business to take advantage of his talents instead. "I'm great at building and leading teams," he says, "and I'm great at creating opportunities and relationships with future vendors. When I spend my time doing that, it's really healthy for the business. When I get involved in other stuff, it's not so healthy. So I use this as a filter in any new opportunities I'm working on." This filter, along with the support team he'd built to protect his time and attention, let his company's growth take off.

Dave sees that his work essentially comprises two activities: *creating relationships* and *packaging opportunities*. These are his greatest strengths and the best ways for him to spend his time. By focusing his energies on these two strengths, he's been able to expand his influence from having one business to now being involved with *fifteen*. But he isn't accomplishing this by working around the clock. "I love that I'm earning money in the process for the freedom it gives us, but I

get the balance now. Fifteen years ago, it was all about the money and the rest was, well, over there," he says.

Today, all of Dave's activities take place within the larger context of his lifetime goals. "You develop a sense," he says, "an awareness of what you want, what makes you happy, and that makes it so much easier to look at all the other stuff and say, 'Water off a duck's back!'"

Coaching is one of the activities he has chosen to include in his life because of the rewards it brings: "I'm able to help people, to teach concepts that I 'get.' That just feeds me. It gives me more and more opportunities and makes me a better person.

"I have people I've coached for ten years, and it's really fun to watch their growth over that time," he says. "But I've learned so much from the participants too. I don't have all the answers." He considers exchange between peers to be one of the most valuable aspects of the Strategic Coach environment, which offers a rare opportunity to meet with like-minded, goal-oriented entrepreneurs who are all looking for an advantage. "It's a clear, honest, 'adult' conversation," he says. "You learn from what worked and from what didn't work, and you take that forward."

Beneath the results and the transformation is a deeper realization that Dave shares with many Strategic Coach participants: "The best investment I can make is in myself, in learning and discovering different ways to look at things. If you don't do this for yourself, who does it?"

Personally, Dave enjoys a great relationship with his son and his two daughters, and knows he's made a difference in their lives, just as they have in his. Ultimately, he's very clear about the effect he wants his life to have: "There are a lot of people we coach—and I'm one of them—who love to have fun. I have a lot of fun in my life. I'll listen to people say they're living to leave a legacy, and I don't disagree with that, but I want to live! My legacy is going to be in the people I've touched, the people I've been involved with: that I've made a difference I can enjoy. I can't enjoy it when I'm dead, but I can enjoy it now. That's what coaching does for me."

For information about Dave LaRue's upcoming workshops, see:
<http://www.strategiccoach.com/workshops/upcoming>