

I'm Retired: Now I Get Even

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CHAPTER 1

ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THE ART OF HIRING AND FIRING ONESELF ON A REGULAR BASIS

It's only appropriate as we begin our discussion of self-employment and, given my rather notorious background, independent consultancy, that I share three definitions of a consultant that are far more accurate than I should be willing to admit. Nonetheless, here they are. A consultant is:

- Someone who knows a 1000 ways to have sex, but, alas, doesn't have a partner.
- Anyone who is more than 50 miles from home and has a briefcase permanently attached to his or her hand.
- Anyone with an unsubstantiated opinion and a dire need for money.

Here's how the story started.

It was a dark and dreary day in the early 70s in my hometown of Columbus, Ohio; or, in other words, a typical winter in the Midwest. I had just received the less-than-welcome news that my mentor and first real employer, an intrepid gentleman named Jack, had grown weary of running the employment firm franchise he started eight years earlier. Jack told me that he was negotiating the sale of the agency to an individual who had spent his entire career to date as an engineer. On the surface, it seemed to yours truly an odd fit; but then, I was a 24-year-old with an attitude, so what did I know. Engineers dealt with slide rules and algorithms all day long. What did they know about people? People were annoyances to be cast aside like free-floating radicals. What did they know about communication? Cube roots and vectors maybe, but communicating and selling? Jack's potential buyer figured he knew enough about both to make a go of it. All right then. Give him credit. Here was a guy with a dream, though some of us more cynical types might have called it delusions of grandeur. Here was a guy who was intent on spending his hard earned retirement before it was time to retire. Who was I to argue?

It was in my best interest to give the guy the benefit of the doubt, right? Meet with him. See if this would-be entrepreneur had what it took to jump into a business unlike anything he had ever dealt with before. See if maybe we couldn't work together. So that's what I did, for about 11 seconds!

Sure, it was a little disconcerting when he started calculating his potential profit using hyperbolic geometry and a compass. Sure, I wanted to laugh myself silly. Sure, I should have been a little less judgmental. Not me. I was 24. I was a hot shot. I had the

world by the tail. There was only one small problem: what I actually had by the tail was a great white shark with a mouthful of teeth so sharp they would have made a Japanese sword-maker giddy. It was easy enough for me to figure out which of the two of us was smart enough and savvy enough to start up his own employment firm, dress for success, drive a Porsche, eat in the city's finest eateries, make a small fortune, and retire at 40. Me, of course. Like shooting fish in a barrel. Child's play.

For more I'm Retired: Now I Get Even please call or e-mail. I look forward to hearing from you.