

Rule No. 9

by B.J. Palmer
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The average businessman has long since forgotten Rule No. 9, "Don't take yourself too damn seriously."

Thousands of businessmen have one fault in common. They are so close to their own thoughts, their own minds, their own selves, desk, office friends, employees, clerks, detail, correspondence that they suffer from the illusion of the near.

They are with what they think, see and do so much at a time that they take it all too seriously and thus suffer from the nearness of themselves to themselves.

I now live in a town where I am sold to everybody. They call me "B.J." everywhere. I live in an immediate family of some 5,000 whom I bring to that city, who love me and I love them. These people appreciate what I do for them. They tell me and I listen to the plaudits of deeds well done. People come from far and near to thank me for what I have done, via some salesman. All of which makes me take my detail seriously. I suffer from it.

YOU need the vision of the far. I need it. I keep my grip (suitcase) packed and when I begin to take my reform work seriously, right then is when I book a few Rotary, Kiwanis and other club talks and hide myself away from my thoughts, ideas, work, students, school, friends, that I might get myself away from myself, that I may walk the streets of strange towns, see strange faces, listen to strange tongues, that I may get the proper perspective of myself.

Many people suffer with a constipation of thought and a diarrhea of words. Many a man has the eyesight of a hawk and the vision of a clam.

Going away from home makes a man shut up and think. It also teaches him to overlook the hawkly detail and gain a distant vision of himself, his service and his Big Job.

Every man owes it to himself, his people and his service to go away about every so often. The more detail he has, the oftener he should go. The more worries, the more he needs to go. The bigger his work, the longer his vacation should be.

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He should go to conventions, attend luncheons, go fishing or hunting, anywhere that he may get away from himself; that he may sit on the banks of the river and there see himself at his desk, with his people, on the job. It is surprising how foolish all of us look when we gaze at ourselves after we get away from ourselves and see ourselves as others see us.

Many a man realizes without analyzing. A certain clothing merchant of our city is noted for his ancestral business qualities. Business and money are his gods. Yet this same man told me but recently that he is now playing golf two afternoons a week. I inquired as to how he could get his mind into that state where he could make it pay. He tells me that the next morning he works three times as hard and accomplishes more than three times as much work. He comes home tired, sleeps sound, wakes up refreshed and piles in solid. Playing golf, he realizes the vision of the far without the mental analysis that accomplishes the end. He stumbled upon the conclusion and even yet doesn't know. You and I can go into this with comprehension and intention.

I am told that John D. Rockefeller rarely went near oil fields; that Mr. Carnegie knew little about steel itself; that John Patterson spends months in Europe away from his huge plant to know better how to run it when at it; that James Gordon Bennett managed the New York Herald from Paris; that Mr. Pulitzer manages the New York World from afar; that Mr. Wanamaker spends and Marshall Field did spend four months out of twelve in Europe for the express purpose of gaining vision; that a Boston department store manager is responsible for this statement: "I must study other business at least THREE MONTHS every year in order to manage my own business properly the OTHER NINE."

We should get away from ourselves, our office, our business to get the proper perspective on its services.

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