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SAM SILVERSTEIN

NO MORE EXCUSES

STORY BY IAN KIRBY

Sam Silverstein's message of accountability on all fronts, corporate and personal has had a resounding impact on the groups he has spoken for and consequently garnered him a prolific status among today's top meetings presenters. Sam's presentation "No More Excuses" takes a good hard look at just why many people are not achieving their goals and fulfilling their potential and Sam presents his mantras on just what to do about it.

Emblazoned across the right column of Sam's website (linked in the virtual edition of this story at www.amerianentertainment-magazine.com) is the bold statement: "There's No EXCUSE For A Bad Meeting" and Sam's principles for success have even been included in his latest book entitled *No More Excuses-The Five Accountabilities For Personal and Organizational Growth*, a hands on and in depth look at his philosophies, some of which he shares with us and the bulk of which would ideally be viewed by your audience in a live setting.

"The program 'No More Excuses' is about making accountability your competitive advantage," Sam explains. "In 30 years of owning businesses, managing, leading and following people and observing other business owners, what I have discovered is that, in my opinion, the number one reason that anyone succeeds in business or in life is because they know what they are accountable for. They apply that accountability."

Sam isn't one to just fire off theories based solely on personal experience, so for the compilation of knowledge in the book,

he personally interviewed over 50 people from around the world (six continents). "From CEOs and Chairpersons, former governors, a guy who climbed Everest and even the man who lead the charge to rewrite the South African Constitution. Everything I learned from them basically boiled down to the five accountabilities that I have outlined in the book. If you are proactively accountable (meaning you know what to be accountable in) and you apply these five accountabilities, you are going to build your organization. You have to, it is just going to happen."

The book is being published on January 4, but Sam has been speaking on the subject and researching it for about five years now. "The book itself is sort of the culmination of focusing, speaking on and researching accountability. Getting it down to something that peo-

you can't change the world in an hour. You can't change an individual in that time and you certainly can't get into the deeply rooted culture of an organization and completely change it so quickly. But what can be done is an introduction to the concept, a hint of the flavor and an awareness that this is a critical element and a shift in focus to these accountabilities is a huge first step."

Sam explains that this mentality of accountability as a paradigm affects every facet of an organization from top to bottom. "Everyone needs to be accountable whether they want to roll out a sales initiative, improve customer service, create a safer work environment – everyone needs to know precisely what they are accountable for. So now, we can take them beyond the speech and offer them the book so they have the entire reference material to go by."

want to find yourself in that position in the first place. So, how do you not find yourself there? Be proactively accountable, that is, to know what you are accountable for. So, when I look at this I look at it from a strategic application point of view."

This may all sound somewhat vague and abstract, so Sam dives right in to detailing the five accountabilities to bring the idea into focus. "The first thing one is accountable for is to 'Do the right things consistently.' By that, I don't mean the morally right thing, but that someone needs to understand what their strategic intent is either as an individual, department or organization and figure out what right things or what activities, if performed consistently, will lead you to the completion of that strategic intent."

Sam says by asking what the right things to



ple could use in an easily digestible form so they could put it to work was my intent."

Obviously an exciting time for Sam, the book now allows him to extend the work he has been doing for live audiences. "When I come in and speak for 45 to 60 minutes, I can share the five accountabilities and I can generate interest and excitement. The audience can relate to and understand the message, but the truth is

Perhaps many may view the other side of the issue, noting that the more accountability applied to each person, the tighter their leash and the less willingness they will have to be ambitious or take risks. "That is just it. When I talk about accountability, I don't speak of it in terms of consequences. I talk about it as a competitive advantage. By that, it's not about standing up and saying, 'OK, X was my fault, I'm sorry, it won't happen again.' While that is all nice and noble, the truth is you don't

do are you are not only forced to analyze what is going on, but also to focus strictly on the activities which will move you forward. "How often do we have activities we engage in that, quite frankly, at the end of the day haven't moved us any further toward our strategic intent? That one concept of knowing you need to do the right things consistently gives you accountability, tells you where you need to go and eliminates time wasting distractions."

While the first accountability may seem simple as "just do your job and don't waste time" when boiled down to its most basic element, moving further down Sam's list of accountabilities may make us think of things we haven't before prioritized. "The second accountability is to 'Manage your space.' To give an example, Apple Inc., who dominates the market in the personal music player, discontinued the number 1 selling device that they had about three years ago. It had between 75-80% of the market and they canned it. It was the iPod Mini, and the reason they kicked it was because it opened up space and room in their product line and the market for something new, the iPod Nano. If they hadn't discontinued the Mini, there would have been no place for the Nano; if you own a retail store and you have some new product line that you want to put out on your floor, you may have to eliminate something to create space for it. So often we get trapped into doing what we have always done because we are used to it or because it is comfortable, but I believe we are accountable to manage our space. What is yielding at the rate it should, what should we expand and what needs to be eliminated?"

Sam has a personal example of this second principle in action. "I had a window and door manufacturing company. We had a product line that had been profitable for many years but we felt there was a new product out there we could generate ten times the revenue from, if we had some place to manufacture the new product. We eliminated the old product line, turned the inventory into cash, sold the equipment and opened up floor space for the new line. Sales went up dramatically. We eliminated not to subtract, but to expand."

Sam is quick to point out due diligence and a balance in reason as desirable, there is no risk without gain but unnecessary risk is generally due to a lack of proper understanding of the subject at hand.

Our third accountability is to "Manage the process." This little nugget falls right in line with the first two points, helping us to better manage complications when we try to do the right things and manage our space. "Managing the process means that anytime you are trying to achieve a strategic intent you are going to run into complications. You have a choice; you either manage the process or throw your hands up

and say 'if it's not meant to be, it's not meant to be.' This should always be our very last resort. If you go to the airport and your flight is cancelled, you have several ways of managing the process. You can say 'Oh, if the flight was cancelled, I wasn't meant to go' and turn around and go home. Or, you could follow the directions over the intercom and go stand over at the counter with 120 other people and hope for a rebooking before the flights run out.

Or, you can pull out your cell phone where you already have the airline's number, call in and in two minutes be booked on another flight. The last example is managing the process, not leaving your fate in other people's hands and retaining control of the situation. All organizations are going to run into roadblocks and challenges and the question at that point is who is managing your process? You, or someone else?" Sam is quick to point out that no matter



how we try to do the right things, manage our space and manage the process, we can't control everything and sometimes the trick is to learn to be okay with that.

The fourth point is that we are accountable to "Establish the right expectations." Sam says this perception of what is expected of us nearly always drives us to the degree at which we perform. "I think it is understood that we perform to the expectations that are set upon us. There was a study of gymnasts done and those who performed at the highest level were also those whose coach's expectations were the highest. We have to understand how to reasonably set our own expectations. If we set them too low we perform at a low level, if they are too high then there are the negative risks of demoralizing ourselves and there is a high likelihood we will make bad choices."

Sam gives an example we are all too familiar with. "Take a look at the banking industry, which set expectation levels unreasonably high. To reach those expectations they made loans they should not have, i.e. bad choices. The question is how to set the right expectations and those have to be based on a combination of your own experience and the experience of others."

The last point Sam makes is perhaps the most important one because of how much our interactions with one another can make up our happiness, success and day to day experiences. "Our fifth accountability is that we are accountable to 'Contribute to our relationships.' I view the relationship in two ways, one is interpersonal relationships- people to people, family friends, peers, coworkers. The other type of relationship is that to the community in which we live and the world we inhabit. When we look at our individual relationships, the reason I saw to contribute to them is that we all need to live to give. Give and give some more. The more we give, the better the people around us will perform and the more they realize we care about them. Looking to take only brings the opposite effect. You often hear people say 'I want to give back.' Well, it's not about giving back; that denotes a conditional term. We need to give without expecting something in return and before someone has given something to us and I am not talking about giving money and gifts, I am talking about time, care and energy, the truly most precious commodities we have. It can be a letter, a phone call, an email, taking a personal interest in something. It is

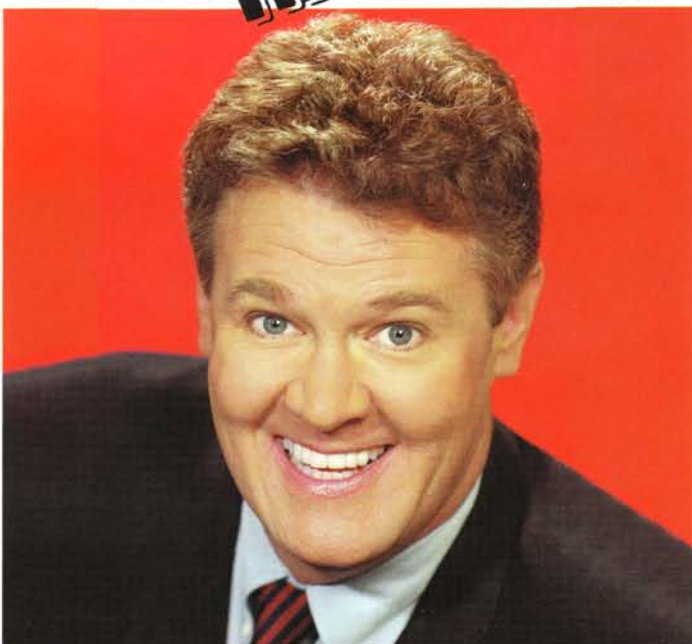
building relationships because ultimately everything we achieve comes down to relationships."

Sam's presentation dives headlong into what we have only scratched on the surface here and as a supplement to the live show his book goes even further. Consider bringing Sam in to speak to your group today and find out how personal and organizational

accountability can make your environment a happier, more productive, safer and secure thing to be a part of.

BOOK IT! For more information on bringing Sam Silverstein to your net event, contact Christa Habersock at See Agency at (310) 903-1971 or for virtual links, log on to our website at www.americanentertainmentmagazine.com.

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