



Jack's Blend

Jack Groot owns JP's Coffee & Espresso Bar, On Track Coffee Consulting and the Midwest Barista School based out of Holland, Mich. E-mail your questions to jack@ontrackcoffeeconsulting.com with "Jack's Blend" as the subject line.

Happy 2009! It's a new year with New Year's resolutions... and all that crap.

As you can tell I am not a resolution person. Why not? Because if I really believed in something I'd be doing it already. If I was serious about losing 30 pounds, I'd be a runner. If I was serious about quitting smoking (I used to smoke, but haven't in more than 25 years) I would do what it takes to make it happen. And that's what I did way back when.

Being in and around coffee for the last 15 years I have talked with many, many people in or going into the coffee business. I have seen people succeed I thought would fail and people fail who had every chance to succeed. Today more and more places serve a great espresso, but so many more serve inferior products. I hate going to a coffee shop and watching the shots pour in 6 seconds. How many times have you been to a place where you didn't like the product or the service or both?

Did you complain?

Did it make a difference?

Many times it won't help to complain because, to be honest, businesses are what they are because the owner wants (or perhaps, allows) them to be that way.

Now, I don't know many people who go into business saying, "I want to serve crappy products, have a dirty store and treat people badly" but that's the customer's experience when they patronize that store. When I visit these stores there are always "reasons" for why they are what they are:

"We can't afford to..."

"I work a full time job and my manager runs the store."

"We're going to change that when we get time."

"I haven't been able to get around to that yet."

Oh, shut up.

If it was important they would do it.

If I really wanted to lose 30 pounds, I could. I know that people have all kinds of personal problems, medical problems, genetic problems and a myriad of reasons they "can't" lose weight, but if I said to you, "I'll give you five million dollars cash to lose 30 pounds; you would be retired with a new BMW in less than 10 weeks. You would find a way to make it happen.

So does that mean if I'm not doing it already, just forget it because it won't happen? No. Absolutely not.

If I really want to lose weight I might need to find a better diet (and stick to it), or begin a new exercise regime and

not skip a day...or six, or perhaps I will begin reading books and magazines on how to lose weight. Ultimately I would absolutely find a way to accomplish that goal. I would also start doing something today. Even if it wasn't the best or perfect answer. Even if I had to change or adapt again next week and then again the following week. I would not consider myself having arrived, but I would congratulate myself for having left the dock.

I love this quote by W. H. Murray: "Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation) there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets: "Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it." (emphasis from the author)

Quoted from the book "The Scottish Himalayan Expedition, 1951," by William H. Murray (1913-1996)

If serving the best espresso was paramount to a coffee shop owner, they would get the equipment they need and the training they need and implement a new training program in their store and insure all employees followed the training program everyday. They would do what it takes to remain on a continuous path of improvement.

When coffee is just an offering on the menu that isn't that important, it will show up in the cup and the bottom line.

So, Happy New Year and here's your chance. Whether you believe in New Year's resolutions is irrelevant. What I want to know is: are you serious about the quality of the coffee you serve, the quality of the service you offer and the quality of the overall business you own? If you are then Nike®, aka "Just do it."



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