

A Lesson in Listening

There are times when you have to make business decisions that are painful. Those decisions are often accompanied by the feeling that your work, effort, worry, and money have all been a waste.

For 4 years now, my partner Rich and I have owned a franchise of [1-800-GOT-JUNK](#). These franchises have been successful all over North America, and we wanted to bring it to Knoxville. The founder of [1-800-GOT-JUNK](#) is a fellow [EO](#) member that I met in 2001. For 4 years I watched the business grow and become successful before we bought the rights to the Knoxville market.

We launched with excitement and did all the right things that the other franchises did to be successful. We hung out door hangers, we did waves (guys in blue wigs next to trucks waving creating attention), we put out signs and tried a lot of the usual marketing programs. So what happened?

A year before we entered the market, a competitor did, and they captured the mind share of the local market place. We found that when people saw us, they usually thought of the competitor (the marketplace was trying to tell us something). As you can imagine, this was not good for business. We thought we could break past this with a national TV advertisement that the franchisor was going to start but they never did. Not long after, the real estate recession came, and paying to have your junk taken away was discretionary and could be delayed or simply done yourself (2nd time the marketplace tried to tell us something).

So what were we to do? Even after we cut back on manpower, we still were accumulating debt and had to make the decision to stop the bleeding. We did, and last week we shut down the business. We finally listened to the marketplace! This week

[Microsoft shut down the Kin Family](#) of mobile phones after only two months. The marketplace had spoken, and they listened.

Lesson learned. We had the real life lesson that this business was not core to our focus and our purpose. Rich and I both work in our software company. The junk business was about an opportunity to make money, and that was it. As we all travel the business path, we continually have to make decisions that might be wrong. I have learned to accept this truth, brush it off, and keep going.

Key Lessons Learned:

- **When the marketplace tries to tell you something...LISTEN!!!!**
- **Follow your passion**
- **Keep a laser like focus**

"Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life – think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, that is way great spiritual giants are produced." – [Swami Vivekananda](#)