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Build a Business, Build a Life

Greatness on Your Own Terms

If you ask most people what a great company looks like, they'll describe a big one. They're picturing big sales numbers, big inventory, and a big building with lots of trucks out front. That's the first picture that comes to mind for most of us, and honestly, it's not wrong. But after 30 years of working alongside tent rental operators across the country, I've seen enough to know that greatness in this industry takes a lot of different shapes.

It starts with understanding something most people overlook. This business is genuinely rare in what it lets you do. When my wife and I started out, we borrowed my dad's barn, used a pickup truck I already owned, bought some tents, and got to work. Try doing that with a grocery store, a manufacturing plant, or a restaurant. The tent rental world offers that kind of entry point, and that flexibility doesn't go away once you're up and running. You can scale up, scale down, pivot, or reset. The business bends around your life in a way most businesses simply can't.

So, what does great actually mean? I've got a customer up in the northeast who runs a small, immaculate operation. He's open just a handful of months a year when it's busy, charges well for his service, and does great work, but the moment the weather shifts and the season ends, he's done. He and his brother travel the rest of the year. It's not a big operation by any conventional measure, but he's crystal clear about what greatness means for him.

That kind of clarity doesn't happen by accident, though. It requires you to step back and think honestly about how you want your life to look. After all, nobody gets out alive, right? That sounds blunt, but sitting with that reality is actually one of the most useful things you

can do as a business owner. If you want to understand what a great company looks like for you, start at the end. What's the legacy you want to leave? What do you want to have built, and what do you want to have lived?

If your answer is a big house, fine cars, and a strong balance sheet, that's great. It just means your company needs to produce serious money, which means serious investment in people, equipment, and infrastructure. If your answer is that you want to see the world, then the time you spend at your business had better be focused and profitable enough to fund that. If your answer is that your grandkids actually knew who you were, then you need to be honest about where your hours are going.

The underlying thing in all of this is time. You only have so much of it, and where you spend most of it is your legacy. Once you're clear on that, something interesting happens. The decisions you face every day, big and small, start pointing themselves in the right direction. You don't have to force every single one of them. Opportunities are always coming at you in this business, and when you know where you're going and why you're going there, you can see them clearly, decide whether they fit, and act.

This industry gives you the room to figure all of this out, whatever season of life you're in. Most businesses don't give you that option. The question most worth asking isn't how big you can build your company. It's how clearly you can define what great looks like for you. Once you have that answer, the rest of it starts to take care of itself.

-Steve Arendt



Vacations can be a rejuvenating break from the hustle of our everyday lives, but some trips are less about sightseeing and more about finally exhaling. Wellness retreats across the country are turning getaways into self-care sabbaticals. From yoga sessions at sunrise to celebrity spas for holistic health care, these refreshing refuges leave you feeling refreshed. If you're ready to make your next vacation your *om* away from home, these destinations are three of the best the U.S. has to offer.

Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health

If stretching into a peaceful pose surrounded by the beauty of nature sounds like your dream reset, the Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health in western Massachusetts is known for its mindfulness philosophy. Located on 100 acres in the Berkshire Mountains, this retreat focuses on yoga, writing, dancing, and other activities to explore your spirituality or just get a little peace and quiet. Many of its yoga sessions are led by prominent instructors, and you can create your own relaxing itinerary of restorative activities.

Canyon Ranch

Canyon Ranch has been a calming oasis in the desert of Tucson, Arizona, since the late '70s. It was created by a real estate developer who wanted to prioritize his health after his father passed away from cancer. Celebrities love this retreat for its holistic health approach, quality cuisine, and upscale spas. Guests seeking self-growth continue to turn to Canyon Ranch to heal their minds, bodies, and spirits.

Sensei in Hawaii and Southern California

Sensei, which has locations in Hawaii and Palm Springs, has mastered the art of self-care. Founded on data-driven research and technology, this wellness center offers three pathways for guests: movement, nourishment, and rest. Attendees receive personalized programs tailored to their unique health needs, including quality meals, personal training sessions, and activities designed to improve sleep. All this five-star treatment aims to help people simplify their lives.

If you are looking for some real R&R on your next getaway, wellness retreats redefine what it means to pack light, focusing less on what you bring and more on what you let go of.

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FIND YOUR OM AWAY FROM HOME

Wellness Getaways
That Reset Your
Mind and Body

RAISING RATES THE RIGHT WAY

Avoid the Price-Hike Panic

Raising prices can make even confident business owners nervous. Nobody wants to be the company that sends out higher invoices only to lose loyal customers. Still, costs and demands can change, and the price of a product or service that made sense two years ago may no longer support the business. Fortunately, with the right approach, you can make the change easier to explain and easier for customers to accept.

Time it carefully.

The best time to raise prices is when your customers are already happy with what they're getting. If service has been spotty or quality has slipped, fix those problems first. For many service businesses, renewal periods or the start of a new year are natural times to review rates. Put those reviews on the calendar so price changes don't come out of nowhere.

Explain the increase early.

One of the worst things you can do is drop a price increase on customers at the last minute. Advance notice gives them time to adjust their budget and prepare for the change. Tell customers about the increase as early as possible and provide specific details about your rationale. Maybe supplier costs went up, or your service now includes more hands-on support. Skipping the details and sending a vague "due to rising costs" line sounds like every other price increase email and shows little respect for your customers.

Give customers options.

Some customers will simply accept the new rate and go about business as usual, but others may need another option before deciding to move forward. You could make the increase more palatable by bundling products or services, or by offering smaller package options. Temporary discounts or a longer agreement that locks in prices for a set period can also keep price-conscious customers around. Just remember, the goal is to keep the right customers, not to hold on to every account, even if it costs you.

Keep the relationship in mind.

Expect questions, and prepare a short explanation your team can use to answer them. For important, long-term customers, consider reaching out personally rather than sending a mass email. In the end, some customers will still leave, but plenty will stay if the change feels fair, clearly explained, and tied to the work they already count on.

30 Years of Building Your Trust

THE CASE FOR CHOOSING TEECO

When I started Teeco Solutions, I wasn't sure it was going to last more than a few years. At the time, our tent washing machines served a pretty small group of people, and I thought I might sell enough of them and simply run out of customers. That's an honest admission, but it also makes where we are today so exciting to talk about.

We're still here 30 years later because we never stopped listening or working to improve. Every nut and bolt we put on our machines reflects something we learned from a problem solved or a customer who needed something and trusted us to respond. The industry itself also grew in ways we couldn't have anticipated, but we grew right along with it.

A few years ago, we became part of Custom Machine Works, and it changed everything. Think about the 3M model. When you see 3M on something, you automatically think quality because that's what the parent company demands across everything it touches. Custom Machine Works operates the same way.

We have nearly 80,000 square feet of manufacturing space, ISO 9001 certification, and a full team of high-end mechanics

who build and service our machines all day long. When you call us with a service issue, you're talking with someone who does this for a living, not someone who was out putting up tents an hour ago. And since joining Custom Machine Works, we've actually reduced our prices while bringing our quality up to a level that's unmatched in the industry.

Our customization options also set us apart. We've grown from simply offering small, medium, and large machines to carrying a full line of new and rebuilt washers in 16 different configurations. Whatever you need, we offer a machine to fit it, whether that's a basic budget-friendly washer or a fully automated option with programmable water recycling.

Every new machine carries a five-year parts and workmanship warranty, the only one in the industry. Rebuilt machines carry a three-year warranty, still better than anyone else's new machine warranty. We also have new products in development that we think are going to turn some heads.

Teeco Solutions has been at this for a long time. We're bigger and stronger than ever, and we're not going anywhere. Give us a call and put one of the most experienced teams in the industry to work for your business.



Before & After



Managing Vinyl Like an Asset

THE STRATEGY BEHIND TENT TOPS

A vinyl tent top looks like one piece of inventory, but the moment you buy it, you face a big management decision. You have a limited amount of money, and you can buy a lot of the cheap stuff or less of the expensive stuff that lasts longer. There's no magic formula, and there are a thousand ways to handle it in this industry. I can only tell you how I did it.

As a growing company, I needed volume. If I rented 50 tents one year and planned to rent 150 the next, I actually had to own them. Cheap vinyl was tempting because I could buy more of it, and my customers couldn't tell what was over their heads anyway. The problem was that the cheap tops fell apart faster, and a few years later, I was facing replacement costs I hadn't planned for.

My answer was to split my inventory into two. I noticed that my medium and small tents generated most of my rental revenue, and they were also the exact sizes the Boy Scout troops and church groups kept coming to me to buy. So, I bought less expensive vinyl in those sizes, rented it hard, and sold it 12-18 months later, usually for what I paid for it. My big tops had no resale market, so I went the opposite way and bought sturdy, high-quality fabric built to last for years.

Here's the counterintuitive part. I relaxed how much we had to baby the fabric in the field. My competitors thought I was crazy dropping the less expensive tents in the mud, but I'd already done the calculation. It would cost me more to pay a crew for hours of labor protecting a top on site than to bring it home and run it through the washing machine.

That washing machine held the whole system together. It kept my cheap tops looking brand-new at resale and my premium tops clean for years. I had the cleanest inventory in the city, and the money I put into those tents kept coming back so I could keep growing.

Keep in mind that this was just one guy's way of doing it. Plenty of operators buy great fabric in every size and keep it for a decade, and that works, too. The point isn't to copy anyone's formula. It's to find one that works for you.

