

Sam Walton's 10 Rules

Rule #1

Commit to your business. Believe in it more than anything else. If you love your work, you'll be out there every day trying to do the best you can, and pretty soon everybody around will catch the passion from you - like a fever.

Rule #2

Share your profits with all your associates, and treat them as partners. In turn, they will treat you as a partner, and together you will all perform beyond your wildest expectations.

Rule #3

Motivate your partners. Money and ownership aren't enough. Set high goals, encourage competition and then keep score. Make bets with outrageous payoffs.

Rule #4

Communicate everything you possibly can to your partners. The more they know, the more they'll understand. The more they understand, the more they'll care. Once they care, there's no stopping them. Information is power, and the gain you get from empowering your associates more than offsets the risk of informing your competitors.

Rule #5

Appreciate everything your associates do for the business. Nothing else can quite substitute for a few well-chosen, well-timed, sincere words of praise. They're absolutely free and worth a fortune.

Rule #6

Celebrate your success and find humour in your failures. Don't take yourself so seriously. Loosen up and everyone around you will loosen up. Have fun and always show enthusiasm. When all else fails put on a costume and sing a silly song.

Rule #7

Listen to everyone in your company, and figure out ways to get them talking. The folks on the front line - the ones who actually talk to customers - are the only ones who really know what's going on out there. You'd better find out what they know.

Rule #8

Exceed your customer's expectations. If you do they'll come back over and over. Give them what they want - and a little more. Let them know you appreciate them. Make good on all your mistakes, and don't make excuses - apologize. Stand behind everything you do. 'Satisfaction guaranteed' will make all the difference.

Rule #9

Control your expenses better than your competition. This is where you can always find the competitive advantage. You can make a lot of mistakes and still recover if you run an efficient operation. Or you can be brilliant and still go out of business if you're too inefficient.

Rule #10

Swim upstream. Go the other way. Ignore the conventional wisdom. If everybody is doing it one way, there's a good chance you can find your niche by going exactly in the opposite direction.