

He Heard “No” over 1,000 Times and Never Gave Up

by Brian Hazelgren

Succeeding in business is no easy feat. It's too easy to let business knock you down. Instead of throwing in the towel when there is a business problem, pick yourself back up, buckle down, and get to work. Many motivational stories prove that with a little hard work, any amount of business success is possible.

Once, there was an older man, who was broke, living in a tiny house and owned a beat up car. He was living off of \$99 social security checks. At 65 years of age, he decided things had to change. So he thought about what he had to offer. His friends raved about his chicken recipe. He decided that this was his best shot at making a change.

He left Kentucky and traveled to different states to try to sell his recipe. He told restaurant owners that he had a mouthwatering chicken recipe. He offered the recipe to them for free, just asking for a small percentage on the items sold. Sounds like a good deal, right?

Unfortunately, though this idea did not sound too great to most of the restaurants. He heard NO over 1,000 times but he continued on telling his story. Even after all of those rejections, he didn't give up. He believed his chicken recipe was something special. He actually counted how many times he got rejected, and the 1,009th try he finally heard his first “Yes.”

With that one success Colonel Harland Sanders changed the way Americans eat chicken. Kentucky Fried Chicken, today better known as KFC, was born.

Colonel Sanders held a number of jobs in his early life, such as steam engine stoker, insurance salesman and filling station operator. He began selling fried chicken from his roadside restaurant in North Corbin, Kentucky, during the Great Depression. During that time Colonel Sanders developed his "secret recipe" and his patented method of cooking chicken in a pressure fryer. Sanders recognized the potential of the restaurant franchising concept, and the first KFC franchise opened in South Salt Lake, Utah in 1952. When his original restaurant closed, he devoted himself full-time to franchising his fried chicken throughout the country.

The company's rapid expansion across the United States and overseas became overwhelming for the Colonel. In 1964, when he was 73 years old, he sold the company to a group of investors for \$2 million (\$16.5 million today).

By the time of Colonel Sanders' death, there were an estimated 6,000 KFC outlets in 48 countries worldwide, with \$2 billion (\$6.2 billion today) of sales annually.¹

The KFC brand is a well known global icon in the franchising and restaurant industries today, and they still continue to deliver ‘finger lickin’ good chicken.

I actually have a good friend named Eddie T. that absolutely craves KFC. When he is asked where he would like to go for lunch...we always know the answer. He's like a little

¹ Smith, J. Y. (December 17, 1980). "Col. Sanders, the Fried-Chicken Gentleman, Dies". *Washington Post*.

kid who wants to go his favorite restaurant and have a kids meal...the man is addicted to KFC chicken!

To be honest while I'm writing this, I have a craving for the extra crispy chicken breast with a side waffle!

One final note as to why this story has always been important to me. That original KFC store was and still is located on the Northwest corner of State Street and 39th South in Murray, Utah where I grew up. My grandmother worked at the restaurant and told us how much she loved to go in and bake rolls and biscuits. She used her own recipe and the customers loved the unique taste of grandma's rolls and biscuits. Those biscuits that you and I love to gobble up from KFC were the original concoction of my grandmother - Flora Lewis West. Too bad she didn't get something in writing to do as Colonel Sanders originally asked for: a small percentage for each item (biscuit) sold!

The moral: When something is worthwhile, there will always be obstacles that will creep up. There will always be circumstances placed in our path that will require us to come up with innovative ways of working around the problem. Colonel Sanders did not view things as problems, he only saw them as a challenge that needed to be conquered, and he was just the one to do it.

We must recognize the fact that obstacles will be coming, and we should always have a plan to offer up solutions to move around them.

Colonel Sanders is a great example of perseverance and never giving up. We must always remember to stay the course, and never give up. Always believe in yourself - in spite of rejection - even when others don't believe in you.

Be persistent when something really matters to you. Just like coming up with that special blend of 64 herbs and spices that the Colonel is famous for...yum! I think it's time to head over to KFC and pick up a bucket of that delicious recipe!

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