

Episode 107: How do Newton's Laws relate to business?



A recent news event made me think about Newton's third law. That made me wonder if all three laws could affect us at work. Let's see.

1. Newton's first law

Law 1: objects in a state of uniform motion tend to remain in that state of motion unless an external force is applied to it.

So, unless you put some force on it, you can't expect to change its motion.

At work we often see things moving along with some momentum driven by process.

If you want to change something or affect it, you have to actually engage.

In other words, don't sit on the sidelines and watch what you don't like.

If you want to make a change in this world, you have to engage or exert some force if you want to affect something's motion.

2. Newton's second law

Law 2: the relationship between an object's mass m , its acceleration a , and the applied force F is $F = ma$.

This idea is an extension of Law 1 and answers how much force do you need?

Sometimes we say that we tried to influence something but didn't try that hard.

I hear people who like to claim they were against something that finally failed.

"Told you so", they say, but most people didn't know they even had a view.

Lesson is, the bigger the issue the more effort you need to make to effect change.

3. Newton's third law

This was the law that made me think about this subject. Law 3: For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.

Two radio hosts spoofed a Nurse in the UK and she later committed suicide.

I don't want to discuss if she did this because of the prank.

Afterwards, the DJs said, "No one could have imagined" that she would.

They miss the Newton's laws – they exerted a force and got a reaction.

In business we have to learn to live with the consequences of our actions.

Sometimes those actions have unintended consequences.

Some might use this as an excuse for not doing anything and that's the wrong answer.

You have to accept both the good and bad reactions to your actions.

Bottom Line: You have to engage if you are going to change something but that action will have a reaction and you need to think through the implications, not avoid getting engaged.