

Rules of Engagement

In business, the rules that matter most are the ones you choose to question.

The affiliate world has no shortage of business owners and a significant shortage of entrepreneurs.

The difference is not capital or courage — it is the willingness to question what everyone else treats as fixed.

Tony · FitFiliate · 2025

All I wanted when I grew up was to eat cake for breakfast if I felt like it. Turns out I can do that. There is just this unwritten nutrition rule. Let alone taxes — why did no one warn me about taxes?

Rule and law are everywhere in the adult world and in business. Some spoken, some written, most simply assumed. For good reason: shared norms kept the tribe together and made cooperation possible. The instinct to follow rules has served the species well.

The trouble is that same instinct — to see the way it is done and emulate it — is exactly what keeps most businesses mediocre.

Emulation Is Efficient, Not Excellent

Every tribe in human history has had at least one entrepreneur — someone who looked at the way things were done, accepted it as normal, and then chose to improve it. Not out of rebellion, but out of curiosity.

Emulation is efficient. When you do not know what to do, you watch what everyone else is doing and copy it. Reasonable survival strategy. Terrible growth strategy.

In the affiliate world, this plays out clearly. Most affiliates have built their businesses by looking sideways at other affiliates. The result is a landscape of similar pricing, similar programming structures, similar challenges, and similar ceilings.

Business Has No Rules

There are taxes. There is ethics — though it appears the latter is more optional than advertised. Beyond those, the rules are yours to write.

If you are not going to improve upon the way something is already done, it is fair to ask why your business needs to exist. If there are already three bread makers in town and you open a fourth with no differentiation, the market will solve for that. It always does.

The owners who succeed long-term refused to accept that the current way was the best way. They kept asking why — about their pricing, their intake process, their retention model, their own role in the business.

The Real Distinction

Business owners come to me with a list of reasons why not. They have identified the walls.

Entrepreneurs come with too many reasons why — too many possibilities, too many directions, and they need help choosing where to go first.

Both need clarity and barriers removed. But they see the world differently. One sees a maze. The other sees an open field.

The willingness to question — to look at a norm and ask whether it is necessary or just familiar — is a practice. It is a muscle. It grows with use.

The practice

Look at your business. Pick one thing you do a certain way because that is how it has always been done. Ask: Is this the best way, or just the most familiar way?

Creativity is not a talent. It is a discipline. And it is the only reliable path to freedom.