

Business Strategy

Success for 2015
By Harvey Mackay

A successful person is an average person, focused.

I love golf – both playing and watching the pros – so you can imagine my delight when my wife Carol Ann surprised me for my birthday with a trip to watch the Ryder Cup in Glasgow, Scotland, in late September. What a memorable experience, one that's been on my bucket list for a long time. The only thing that would have made it better would have been a USA team victory! Along with the spectacular scenery and outstanding golf, the thing that struck me most was the focus of all the players.

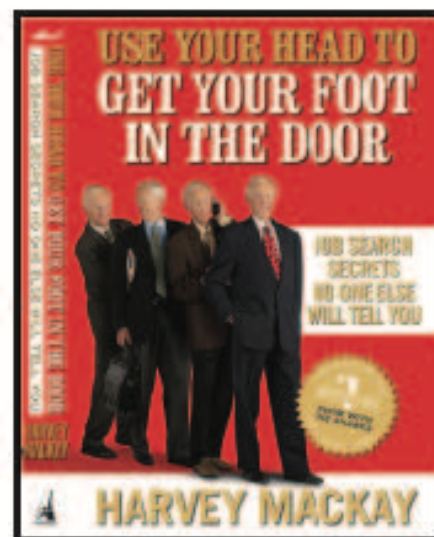
It's easy to have focus when everything is going well, but great athletes keep their focus when they are staring at defeat. A sure way to fail is to lose focus. I remember when my close friend Lou Holtz was asked to speak to the American team at the 2008 Ryder Cup by then-captain Paul Azinger. Holtz told the players to remember the word WIN. WIN stands for What's Important Now? Holtz told them to evaluate the past but focus on the future. If you just made a bogey, what's important now? Your next tee shot. If you make a birdie, what's important now? Your next tee shot. You play one shot at a time and stay focused. He finished by telling the players to enjoy the competition ... enjoy what you are doing, but still stay focused. That team won, the last time the U.S. team brought home the Ryder Cup.

I watched Holtz do the same with all of his football teams at Minnesota, Notre Dame and South Carolina. As Holtz said, think only about the next play or point, not what just happened. You can only focus on what will happen next. Don't look back. Don't complain. If you maintain your focus on the future, anything can happen.

Years ago when I played golf for the University of Minnesota, my coach, Les Bolstad, drove home the point about focus. I remember practicing and getting ready for the NCAA Golf Championship Tournament at Purdue University. Les told me to focus on each shot as if it was going to be my last. I would say to myself, "This is the last drive I'm ever going to hit, so it better be good. This is the last putt that I'm ever going to make, and so on."

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I've carried that philosophy through to my work life. "This is the last speech I'm ever going to give, so it better be good. This is the last book I'm ever going to write ... This is the last acquisition I'm ever going to make" It takes that kind of focus to succeed. I'm convinced that one of the top reasons that keeps people from getting what they want is lack of focus. People who focus on what they want to achieve, prosper. Those who don't, struggle.



Forbes Magazine did a story on the nine habits of productive people. One of them was on focus, specifically using your morning to focus on yourself. The article stated that it's a big productivity killer to start your mornings by checking your email and your calendar. This allows others to dictate what you accomplish. Start your day out right by ignoring your emails and having a good breakfast, reading the news, meditating, or working out. This ensures you've got the necessary fuel for a productive day.

I couldn't agree more. I make my to-do list every morning by working backwards: What do I need to accomplish by the end of the day? By the end of the week? The end of the month? That tells me where to focus. Is your work team focused on the right goals? The Change Management website offers this simple test: Ask everyone in your group what the organization's mission is, how it affects their jobs, and how they contribute to it. If a significant percentage can't provide a persuasive answer, you need to either communicate your mission more consistently and effectively, or change it so people understand their roles better. A business can not succeed without a common focus.

A martial arts student approached his teacher with a question. "I would like to improve my knowledge of the martial arts. In addition to learning from you, I would like to study with another teacher in order to learn another style. What do you think of this idea?" The master answered, "The hunter who chases two rabbits catches neither one." **ESQ**

Mackay's Moral: Attitude is the mind's paintbrush – it can color any situation.

Stay focused on one thing. Trying to get everything will get you nothing.



Harvey Mackay is a CEO and best-selling author, international speaker and business guru. His syndicated business articles appear in more than 100 newspapers throughout the United States each week.

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