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The Big League Secret To Business: Focus, Focus, Focus

It's not a big surprise that big league baseball players can hit a pitch far better than the rest of us. Research on the game's best hitters has shown that they have excellent hand-eye coordination and can respond quickly to visual cues. Indeed, one of the keys to a superior ball player's performance is excellent vision and focus that allow him to see a baseball perfectly as it travels at high velocity toward home plate.

Consider these facts: It takes approximately 0.4 seconds for the fastest pitches to reach the batter's box. In that short time, the batter needs to view the pitch, determine rotation, speed and angle of flight, and almost immediately make a swift decision to swing or to hold. Noting that the swing itself takes approximately 0.20 seconds and that the brain takes about 0.03 seconds to process the event, a skilled batter has about 0.17 seconds to act.



TRENTON, NJ - APRIL 25: New York Yankees pitcher Andy Pettitte warms up in the bullpen prior to making a start for the Trenton Thunder April 25, 2012 in Trenton, NJ

Baseball players who have achieved greatness at the plate have done so by persistently keeping their eyes on the goal at hand: connecting with the ball.

Entrepreneurs must likewise keep their eyes and focus on their companies. They achieve greatness by avoiding any situations that might distract them. As such, they must constantly and tightly fix their vision on the most important components of the enterprise. From my experience, the following business areas deserve daily and unflagging attention:

- Customers
- Solutions
- Money
- People
- Priorities
- Resources

- Processes

Let's delve deeper into why these areas of focus are so incredibly important to our business.

Customers. Customers are the life blood of a company. They buy our products and services and provide our organization with revenues. As business owners, we should spend a good portion of our day listening to customers and potential buyers. Ask how they feel about our products, pricing, service, support, warranties, and the overall buying experience. Learn what product improvements they want and how they feel about our competition. Keeping an eye – or two – on the customer is a critical task.

Solutions. To satisfy our customers and keep them happily buying, we need to design and build products that surprise and delight. Whether we sell high-end, value-added products or simple commodities, buyers should feel they have purchased something that will take care of their needs. We should spend time each day assessing the viability, relevance and performance of the products we make and deliver to customers

Money. Successful entrepreneurs focus on the flow of money in and out of their companies. We need to watch revenues, margins, expenses and profits, and know how much money we have in the bank each day and which bills need to be paid and when. Never miss payroll. Carefully anticipate the need for further capital or loans for working capital and growth. To succeed in our businesses, the topic of money needs to be top of mind.

People. Every company needs employees to carry out business assignments. We should spend a portion of our day visiting with our valued workers to learn if they are engaged, well trained, customer focused and results driven. Recognize employees who excel and help those that need improvement. Interviewing, hiring, training and motivating new employees are also regular tasks that every manager should perform.

Priorities. Award-winning entrepreneurs know what needs to be done and are focused on it – and this should be our mantra as well. We should develop company-wide and personal “must do” lists that we monitor daily. We must learn to be disciplined in our actions. Everyone has limits, so we must delegate assignments to other workers with experience and skill. Lastly, we need to learn to manage time and resist unnecessary and distracting situations.

Resources. Successful entrepreneurs marshal the best resources to achieve desired objectives. We must hire and match the best people to jobs within our companies and manage financial projects adroitly. Purchasing the right assets will help us support customers and employees. We must then monitor the performance of all resources to achieve optimal return on investments.

Processes. Great leaders have learned and developed the various steps to complete numerous company tasks, from beginning to end. To be great leaders, we should write these steps down, teach and monitor them, and they'll then be integrated throughout our organizations in a seamless manner. Then we can more easily note and correct any aberrations. If we're thoughtful, we'll watch these processes carefully to ensure compliance and improvement.

I recommend these key components be part of a daily dashboard so they are never forgotten nor neglected. Just like a car dashboard reports car

performance elements such as fuel consumption, oil level and speed, a business leader can monitor company performance to assess the health and well being of the organization. The key is to carefully watch what's being reported and make swift corrections as needed.

As an old baseball coach used to tell me, "Alan, if you want to hit a home run, don't take your eye off the ball." This axiom is fundamental to a flourishing business as well.

What are the ways you work to help your own organization to maintain focus? I welcome your examples and your thoughts. You can reach me here, at [@AskAlanEHall](#), or at [www.AlanEHall.com](#).

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