

HOW TO FOCUS ON YOUR BUSINESS



Business owners are hard working and full of grit, meaning it's hard to get them to quit. This is why I love working with them. Business owners also tend to be people full of big ideas, vision and sometimes a short attention span. This is also why I love working with them, and one of the areas I've found they need some help with.

Quite a few owners that I've encountered are very good at coming up with new ideas of how to improve their business, increase sales or some other idea that sounds worthy of pursuit. But, I also notice that many business

owners struggle with staying focussed on the new idea long enough to execute on it and bring it to fruition. This is why I continually say, "Ideas are dime-a-dozen, but execution is worth a million dollars." While there are many facets to execution, it all begins with focusing on the right idea, and maintaining that focus long enough to see it work.

I've identified five key steps to maintaining focus on your business.

1. **Decide what your priority is.** With all of the viable ways to make money in your industry, expand your market, serve your customers better and improve, you likely already have a list of things to do. Take the time to list out all of the goals you can think of no matter how big or small they may seem. Then sift through them and decide what is the first and most important goal I should pursue. After you've done this, don't get rid of your list. File it away somewhere. I'll tell you more about why in a little bit.

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2. **Commit to pursuing your priority.** Owners I talk to about this step often back away and begin to doubt whether or not the priority is really that important. Although these owners may not always recognize it, they have a fear of commitment, and want to leave themselves an escape hatch in case a better idea comes along later. If you truly believe you've identified your top priority, then it is a good idea, and it is worth committing to. This is the modern day equivalent of Cortes's famous "burn the boats" philosophy.
3. **Don't allow yourself to be distracted by "shiny objects".** I find that people who are full of big ideas, vision, and optimism are great leaders, but also struggle to control

their strength and fall victim to it when it's not correctly harnessed. Shiny objects are what I refer to as other ideas that seem interesting and seem to have some legitimate merit if pursued. In fact they may be a great idea that really can create immense results if pursued. What's shiny about them is that from where you stand they suddenly seem like more fun to pursue than what you're currently doing. But, this doesn't mean the original idea you're pursuing has lost its original value. It also doesn't mean that this new idea should be discarded. Remember that list you created in step one? The one that I told you to file away and I'd tell you why later? This is why. Add your new "shiny" ideas to your list and keep them for later. At some point you'll accomplish the priority you're working on and will be ready to add a second priority, and a third, and so on. You're just not ready now.

4. **Revisit your original motivation.** If you find yourself being distracted, ask yourself, "Does my original priority still work even if it isn't exciting anymore?". If the answer is "Yes", then don't quit. Keep going.
5. **Continually evaluate your priority.** There really may be legitimate reasons not to pursue your priority any more. Perhaps a significant turnover in key staff, or losing a key partner like a vendor requires you shift focus to another area. However, there may also be reasons your priority isn't working the way you wanted it to that don't mean you should drop it. Just because it becomes hard work doesn't mean it's not working. Or if it's not working because you're not executing it the right way doesn't mean it's time to quit, it means it's just time to change what you're doing.

The ability to identify the right priority, and to maintain focus on that priority for extended periods of time can be a tough thing to do, but when it's done it can mean the difference between surviving and thriving.

