

Time Out

"The secret of my success is simple. I just work harder than anyone else" said the first of four speakers on a superstar panel at a national convention of mortgage brokers. She then went on to describe her typical workday of scrambling to get referrals that began at 5 am and ended at about 10 pm. A work day that consisted of calling on realtors, sending out weekly update sheets, writing new ads, attending open houses, shaking lots of hands and endless schmoozing and boozing.

The next two 'superstars' practically lip-synched her words. I was exhausted just listening. A great success strategy, I thought, for not having a life.

. After hearing the first three superstars talk about their marathon strategies, I was ready to slip out of the session. But the first words of the last speaker, Scott Beaman, the top producer in the country, stopped me in my tracks. "My strategy" he said, "is to give a passionate 80% effort. I work my butt off 6 hours a day, 5 days a week." This is either a joke or a jerk, I thought, but I stayed anyway.

Don't compete Change the Game

Beaman went on to outline a totally different strategy than the previous three workaholics. His day wasn't made up of racing madly to open houses, sending out mailers, phoning prospects. His approach was to go the local Chamber of Commerce to find out the companies that were moving into the area. He would then contact the company's human resource director, get a list of the people being transferred, email them and schedule a meeting at their headquarters

His presentations there would include video, slides and handouts with information on housing, schooling, and the area in general. He would also *pre qualify them for mortgages*, find out their specific needs and upon his return send them any additional information they requested.

Rather than competing with other mortgage brokers Beaman had changed his game from being reactive to proactive. His success was not a result of working harder and longer, but to his bold, innovative thinking. By rethinking the rules of the game and redefining his role with his customer Beaman had broken out of the old mortgage broker 'box'. Reinventing the game enabled him to become successful without having to work as hard or as long as his sweating, sleep deprived competitors.

Take a Time Out

"I used to be a work-a-maniac like most people in my field," Beaman told me afterward," but I realized that though I was doing well I didn't have a life. I was missing seeing my kids grow up and my relationship with my wife was lousy. And I seemed to be tired all the time.

"So I took a 'time out', actually a week off, and analyzed my game. Stepping back from the action enabled me to see things more clearly and helped me to realize that there were lots of new companies moving into our area which meant lots of people who were going to be looking for housing and mortgages. So rather than wait for them to come to me, I decided to flip the rules around and went to them. I started taking a proactive stance rather than a reactive one. I'm much more successful now and I spend more time with my kids. I go to all their games and recitals and my home life is great. "

Out of Touch

The ethos today is 'never be out of touch'. We carry our cell phones strapped to our belts like cowboys carried their six shooters. And feel just as naked without them. We play a round of golf with the phone in the golf bag. We hit the beach for some sun and surf but not without our pager sitting at the top of our beach bag.

An executive for a major fast food chain was showing his schedule, to the new CEO. "I want you to know I am always available." He told her. She looked at his schedule which was busy as one of the commuter lines at Grand Central Station and with a genuinely puzzled expression, asked, "When do you get time to think?"

Brain Shift

In my programs I always ask, "How many of you get your best ideas, the barn burners, light bulbs, the aha's, while at work?"

No one ever raises their hand.

"What is the room in your house in which you get your best ideas?" I ask. The response is always the bathroom, shower or bedroom. "Why is that?"

"Because no one bothers me and I get time to think." is the response.

When I was teaching, several graduate school students did a study on where people get their best ideas. They found what you'd expect. It was while driving, exercising, taking a shower, a nap, in the garden. In other words the best ideas always came when people were not at work.

Normally at work we do left brain thinking which is linear, rational and logical. The best, most innovative, ideas however emerge when we are operating out of the right hemisphere of our brain which controls creativity and intuition.

Thinking Time

Does this mean that you should have a bed or a shower in your office? Nope. But what you definitely should do is to exercise your right brain by taking thinking *time*. People in some of the most high pressure occupations, like sports take time outs. Why? To regroup, re-energize, rethink, re-strategize.

A major business magazine did a study of leaders from all fields and found that over two thirds of them talked about spending a half an hour a day of thinking time. Some would leave the building and take a walk, others would exercise, some talked about simply sitting and dreaming, one admitted to practicing his putting on his office rug. And all talked about that this was the time when they did their best thinking and got their best ideas.

Stepping back from the action provides you with a different perspective. You see things you didn't when you were in the thick of the action fighting fires. One technique is to take some quiet time every day. The CEO of Federated Online which runs Macy's and Bloomingdales told me that he shuts off his radio, cell phone and pager while driving to and from Mill Valley into San Francisco every day. That quiet time he said gives him time to think with no interruptions and is often when he gets his best ideas.

Discussing the importance of this type of creative break, Tom Peters mentioned that Horst Schulze, the President of the Ritz Carlton hotel chain, spends a half an hour every morning *meditating* on better ways to provide great customer service. And this is for an institution renowned for fabulous customer service.

You can always find reasons to work" Says Carisa Bianchi the president and CEO of innovative ad agency TBWA/Chiat/Day in San Francisco. "There will always be one more thing to do. But when people don't take time out, they stop being productive. They stop; being happy and that effects the morale of everyone around them."

The great Irish author George Bernard Shaw claimed that few people actually think more than two or three times a year. I've made an international reputation for myself, he went on, by thinking once or twice a week.

People blanch at the thought of taking a time out at work. "I'm working as hard as I can just to keep up.' Who's got the time? My response is that you don't *not* have the time if you want to keep out in front of all the changes that are coming at you in this laser fast environment

It's important to understand that taking a short time out to refuel, refresh or recreate doesn't mean that you are goofing off. When you take a break, your brain doesn't shut off. The ideas that you have been thinking about shift to a 'back burner' where they incubate. Problems you've been working on make an unconscious shift from the left logical brain to the right creative brain. And then boom! When you least expect it, the lightning strikes.

One of the ways to fuel the creative fires and activate your creative right brain is start with a left brain analysis of the situation. Immerse yourself in the problem you are trying to solve. Learn everything you can. Do all the preparation.

Then, let go of thinking about it. Forget it! Do something else. I can almost guarantee you that at some point the lightning will strike and you will get an important new insight into the area you are working on. It's like that experience we've all had of trying to remember something or someone's name and no matter how hard we try we can't get it. Then when we focus elsewhere, *bam!* It hits us.

Day Dreaming

To stir the creative juices, award winning creator and imaginer Joey Reiman, the head of the innovative think-tank Brighthouse, whose clients include Coca Cola and Delta, talks about the importance of taking creative breaks which he calls day dreaming. "Daydreaming is at the heart of Brighthouse." says "Our belief is that the act of day dreaming, or what we prefer to call incubation, creates unheard of and unthought-of of possibilities. It's important to be idle" Reiman says. "People who keep busy all the time are generally not very creative."ⁱ

Pioneering

Working hard does work. It's the American ethic. And it definitely can lead to success. But as you can see from the strategy that Scott Beaman created, as well as many others discussed in my new book; "*How to Succeed in Business Without Working so Damn Hard*" it's not the only way. The American ethic is also one of a pioneering spirit, of exploring new territory. It is one of creating, rather than responding to, change and new opportunities, of being out in front of the wave rather than trying to keep up with it. .

To succeed in these rapid changing times, whether you are an entrepreneur like Beaman or climbing the corporate ladder, it is necessary to challenge the old

modes, myths and mind sets and rethink rules, redefine your role with the customer and reinvent your game. But you're not going to do this by just working faster and longer. Taking a time out to develop bold, innovative, out of the box strategies will enable you to come up with dramatic new solutions to old problems, create exciting new opportunities and possibilities and succeed, beyond what you ever thought you could, without having to work so damn hard.

NY Times best selling author and internationally known speaker, Dr. Robert Kriegel's latest book is "*How to Succeed in Business Without Working so Damn Hard*". He can be reached at bob@kriegel.com