



# ENTREPRENEUR'S CORNER

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## When You Start Missing the Ball, Find Your 'Sweet Spot' and Swing Easy

by Jack Roseman, Contributing Columnist

More than 30 years ago I took a golf lesson. The instructor gave me a club, put this little ball on the ground and said, "Now let me see how far you can hit it."

Once you have a club in your hand, this little ball on the ground in front of you and that kind of challenge, something happens inside of you.

Something powerful. I looked at that ball and brought that club back and down with all my energy, just as hard as I could. I was going to kill that ball. Well, I hit the ball, but it didn't go very far. It just dribbled out in front of me.

The instructor says, "Jack, let me suggest something. Why don't you relax? Take it easy. You'll find that if you do, if you bring the club down through a full swing and the ball happens to be in the way, it'll go a mile."

I took 10 lessons in all, but I don't think I learned anything more important than that. And as I have run my own

companies and mentored other entrepreneurs, I think there are times in the entrepreneurial experience when that's also the most important lesson to remember.

Now don't get me wrong. I'm a hard-driving entrepreneur. I expect people to work 18 hours a day, seven days a week. I didn't expect any less from me when I was in business. But there are times when you need to push, and there are also times when you can be pushing too hard to your own detriment, where you defeat your own purpose.

So, how do you know when to lay back? I would say when you find yourself flailing away and missing the ball. That's when it's time to take a deep breath, relax, step back and look over your fundamentals. Examine your concept. Make sure you have the right club to execute it. And then give it a full, relaxed swing.

The most important fundamental to examine is your focus. The would-be entrepreneur has got to know his or her focus: what is it I want to be known for? An issue I see in a lot of business plans is entrepreneurs who want to be everything to everybody. This is an age of specialization. You have to focus, focus, focus. The entrepreneur must ask: "What is it that this company is going to do better than anyone else?"

People as individuals have a right to exist. Companies have to earn that right everyday. What differentiator does this company have? What unfair advantage? Why should people call me when they could call a dozen others? What is it that I want to be known for? What is the position that I want to put my company in so when people think about X, they automatically think about me? And that is the question you answer with focus.

You can't do that if you start doing all kinds of things. I

mentored an entrepreneur who wanted to do two things. He wanted to do high-end IT consulting. In addition, he wanted to take a rent-a-body approach. The office people wanted him to be like a rent-a-body. I told him that what that does is confuse the company and its customers.

Are you here or are you there? If I need five programmers do I call you, or if I need a high-powered consultant to implement a half-million-dollar ERP system do I call you? If you say either one, you are saying nothing. To say either one is to confuse everybody. So I advised him, although I'm not sure he bought it, to stay with the high-end kinds of things and if he wanted to do the rent-a-body approach to create a separate company to do it.

So when you feel like you are beginning to flail around, when your stomach is tied in knots, it may be time to relax and take a deep breath and remember the ideal golf swing. Review your fundamentals. And among the fundamentals you need to keep in mind are the following: one is focus, two is differentiation, three is unfair advantage. What unfair advantage can you bring to your niche? And why you?

If you review these and you have clear and accurate answers to them, then you will find that executing - hitting the ball cleanly on the sweet spot - is a whole lot more likely.

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