

# Finding the focus and stamina to take your biz-ness to the next level

Your mind hits a prolonged mental block.

Annnd your business is flat, just like it was last week, and last month.

But, you know it doesn't need to be this way, because your offer or service is solid, and people have bought your stuff before. But, you just can't seem to get a grip on doing the work that matters.

And it's diabolically frustrating. And it's painful - and what better way to avoid pain than to distract ourselves. Which, when we finally catch that distraction, is even more frustrating.

## **How do we break this cycle?**

How do we switch from being entertained by social media and distractions, to feeling interested or driven by our work, so that we can go to the next level?

This must be at the root of thousands of self help books. Some say to do more through time blocking or brain optimisation. Others say to do less and you'll be more effective at getting key tasks done on your business. It can all get confusing, quickly.

## **Here I'll share three steps that have been helpful for me.**

These have saved me in business at least twice (once I'll share below), and are behind how I got the first book done in a few months, publish articles, and podcasts. In fact, every stage of growth in any business that I've been involved with, has come from this.

The steps are: Create "death ground" urgency, Know what matters, and Find Focus.

# 1 - Create urgency

There's a great book by Robert Greene, called 33 Strategies of War.

A lot of people know Greene's other books, especially 48 Laws of Power. But 33 Strategies of war is great. It's not about war tactics. It's about strategy and philosophy, and can be applied directly to business. Anyway in one of the chapters he talks about a concept called "Death Ground". Basically what this is, is when you're in war, you position your own army so that their back is against the wall. This eliminates all ability to procrastinate or remain lazy. Then your army becomes more effective and stronger.

The idea underneath this is that our procrastination or inability to focus becomes our worst enemy.

*"You don't have time for this display, you fool," he said in a severe tone.*

*"This, whatever you're doing now, may be your last act on earth. It may very well be your last battle. There is no power which could guarantee that you are going to live one more minute..."*

*"... Acts have power," he said, "Especially when the person acting knows that those acts are his last battle. There is a strange consuming happiness in acting with the full knowledge that whatever one is doing may very well be one's last act on earth. I recommend that you reconsider your life and bring your acts into that light... Focus your attention on the link between you and your death, without remorse or sadness or worrying. Focus your attention on the fact you don't have time and let your acts flow accordingly. Let each of your acts be your last battle on earth. Only under those conditions will your acts have their rightful power. Otherwise they will be, for as long as you live, the acts of a timid man."*

*"Is it so terrible to be a timid man?"*

*"No. It isn't if you are going to be immortal, but if you are going to die there is not time for timidity, simple because that timidity makes you cling to something that exists only in your thoughts. It soothes you while everything is at a lull, but then the awesome, mysterious world will open its mouth for you, as it will open for every one of us, and then you will realise that your sure ways were not sure at all. Being timid prevents us from examining and exploiting our lot as men."*

- Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan ,Carlos Castaneda, 1972

Dramatic. But effective.

Our first business was a running retail store.

I'd sunk all my cash into getting as much stock as I could, but still couldn't fill up the wall of shoes.

So I had sporadic models, with half size runs.

Anyway, rent was over \$5k that first month, and I was already running low.

### **My back was against the wall. I needed sales.**

So what happened was a Nike representative came to me. His name was Mike. Mike from Nike.

And Mike helped me out with a contact list of emails, of all the podiatrists and trainers in the area.

Basically what I did was emailed all of them for an introduction, and then went out and met them.

I think I emailed 271 people.

I met up with twenty or thirty.

It was enough to get a few referrals, and then the word of mouth started to spread.

### **If I wasn't 'back against the wall,' would I have emailed them?**

Probably, but it may have taken a lot longer.

As long as we have the ability to act, creating a positive pressure to act is a great way to see change. The only problem, is you need to find a way to manufacture this urgency. For most people, they're living in a pretty comfortable life. So there really isn't much urgency. And we have a lot of things to distract ourselves with - social media, Netflix et cetera.

We need to figure out some way to create the urgency despite all of this comfort.

### **One way is to actually create it. Make the metaphorical 'death ground' more real.**

Sink a bunch of money into something. Invest in a marketing project. Invest in a mentor. Invest in a book you want to publish.

Figure out what a meaningful amount of money is to you, and then put that on the line. It needs to be enough to create urgency, so that you wake up and you move.

Now, having said all that, I don't know if it'll work for everyone. I'm reminded of one guy I worked with when I was a personal trainer. And he had a heart attack. And then he made it through, but the doctor told him that if he doesn't change up his health quick - he was a highly stressed out accountant - then he probably wouldn't make it much longer. And the dude wasn't that old. Maybe mid sixties. He was literally on death ground.

But then this guy came in, and he wasn't even that committed to his training. It was sad. If there's one thing that will help with health - it's some movement, and fixing up your diet. He just couldn't be bothered though. He was an awful client. Always late. He had too much money, but not enough sense.

So it might not work for everyone, but it'll work for most people.

## **2 - Know what work actually matters**

Say you're really focused on your business - you're on death ground - but then you've got to figure out what the heck to work on. Do you work on your offer. Do you work on your sales process? Or what about your marketing?

To be honest, this is where a mentor can come in. Someone who has overcome the force of resistance, and overcome distraction, and is keeping you on track with the right tasks.

We need to either immerse ourselves in the problem very deeply to know where the work lies, or, we can consult or talk with someone else who is familiar with the problem and benefit from their insights.

Both can work, but either way it's important, and can lead to growth.

Example:

I've seen business owners at \$30k months want to stop, and start a new business on the side to make more money... My job - why they would pay me, is to slow them down here. We would talk through this, and realise that there was still a lot of potential and work to be done with the main offer. And in fact, even from a financial perspective, it would be a lot easier to grow through the first offer, than it would be to create an entirely new offer for a new customer segment.

When he kept going, the guy went to 50, 60, 80, then \$100k + months, all from this one principle.

**Figure out what matters relative to your mission, and stick to it.**

### **3 - Find your focus**

How do we stay the course?

It seems like such a simple task.

And yet, it's fraught with difficulty for business owners all over the world.

A while back I met a guy from New Zealand who had built an online education platform. Basically it was a SAAS product. Anyway, the business was seeing some success, and soon the guy was making good money with this startup. The problem was, he was also spending it. He was starting to go out, drink more, gamble... Because there was so much money flow, it was a case of why not have some fun? Anyway, soon they started to think about growing this company and exiting it. Or selling it off. And so he talked to his own mentor, because there was no way that he could grow it doing what he was doing. What happened was the guy basically forced him to lock himself in his office, and do sales calls. So he was constantly calling, setting up meetings with educational facilities, making sales.

Eventually this created the uptick they needed in the user base.

And soon he sold it off for somewhere between \$30-\$50 million dollars.

Once we know what to work on, we need to figure out a way to find, and hold, our focus. And the way this dude did it was through brute force.

**Personally I go on a slightly different angle. I prefer interest-driven focus.**

I'll explain with an example.

Right now I'm writing the second book, which is on World Building. It's no easy task to write a book. It takes some work. And a lot of time.

And to be honest, there's a lot of other stuff I'd rather be doing than sitting there and pounding out words on a keyboard.

BUT...

When I can reframe that situation, and reconnect with the fact that I am actually deeply interested in the topic, and that it is *interesting* to me to write and teach these concepts, then I can really write.

**And so this is the concept of *writing from a place of interest*.**

And so it is with all of my work. To an extent, there's really no difficulty in staying focused, because as long as I have enough energy, this is the main thing that is attracting my attention at the time. Or in other words, it's easy to focus on things that hold our curiosity.

This leads us to the final point there...

I don't know about you, but to me, when I'm in a low energy state, it's easy to get distracted.

So this sounds super cliched, but figuring out what gives you enough energy, and what takes energy away, and maximising, or limiting, accordingly, is super important.

For me, to stay focused I need enough food and enough sleep. Maybe some walking and some training here or there.

It ain't super complicated, but it is important.

## OK let's summarise

When we want to grow a business, it takes what can feel like an incredible amount of work.

One way to reframe this, is see it as a large amount of energy, that you are directing into the work, and not into a bunch of other random things. Simple right? Not always easy though. But that's OK, because our three steps are:

See that if your hand isn't being forced into urgency and action, then you need to force it yourself.

Put yourself on Death Ground somehow.

The second thing is you want to be focusing on the right thing.

If you get this wrong, you can spend all kinds of time doing random stuff, that *feels* like working, but doesn't get you anywhere at all.

Ask some questions, get some help, and make sure you know exactly what it is that you need to focus on.

Our last step, is to get focused.

Some people seem to thrive by brute forcing this. Others, like myself, tend to do better when it's interest led. i.e. orienting the work itself towards problems you like to help solve anyway.

If you follow these steps, and create ways to be *interested* in the work as you go, you'll be surprised by your output, productivity, and in many cases the growth and maturity of your business.