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IDEA 1: CENTRAL THEME

- As a leader you need to have your personal Focus on most the critical things in the company.
- Similarly, if everyone in the company is just as focused, then the organization as a whole can be said to be focused. This is the culture of a high performing organization.

IDEA 2: WARREN BUFFET'S TWO LIST STRATEGY – ANECDOTE

- Warren Buffet asked his pilot – Mike Flint to make list of top 25 goals in his life, which he did. Next, he asked him to circle his top 5 goals and asked him how he will go about focusing on these two lists. Of the top 5 and then the rest 20 remaining goals.
- Mike Flint told Buffet that he would focus on his top 5 list immediately and the rest 20 as and when he gets time. Warren said -absolutely No! The second list is what all you *should not* pay any attention to, until you have accomplished what you wanted to in your top 5 list.

IDEA 3: JERRY SIENFIELD'S UNBROKEN CHAIN





- Jerry Seinfeld – one the most successful comedians had a method to force himself to stay focused on writing jokes day after day. He used to mark his wall calendar with an X for the day he wrote on his jokes. After a few days he would have a consecutive chain of Xs’.
- So instead of intense focus in a single day – persistent sustained focus over long period yields better results. In Jerry Seinfeld’s’ case – he kept writing jokes every day and over time had years of unbroken chain of Xs’. Like Jerry, don’t break the chain of Xs’ – keep at it.

IDEA 4: DO THIS FIRST IN MORNING – EAT THE FROG

- If we have to do a difficult task on any given day- identify that tough task and do it as the first thing in the morning. This is called “Eat the frog”. If you have two difficult tasks – eat the bigger frog first.
- When one doesn’t handle these frogs – they just sit there and croak and become bigger nuisances over time. Tackling the difficult problems upfront helps in creating a distraction free focus on high impact items.

IDEA 5: FOCUS ON THE RIGHT THINGS

- Author Chris Bailey’s introduces the concept of Intentional Attention by dividing the work in four quadrants, with the aim to being mindful of where we spend our time. Being aware of where we spend our time – we can focus on the upper quadrants and reduce / eliminate the lower two quadrants

FOUR TYPES OF TASKS

	UNATTRACTIVE	ATTRACTIVE
PRODUCTIVE	Necessary Work	Purposeful Work
UNPRODUCTIVE	Unnecessary Work	Distracting Work

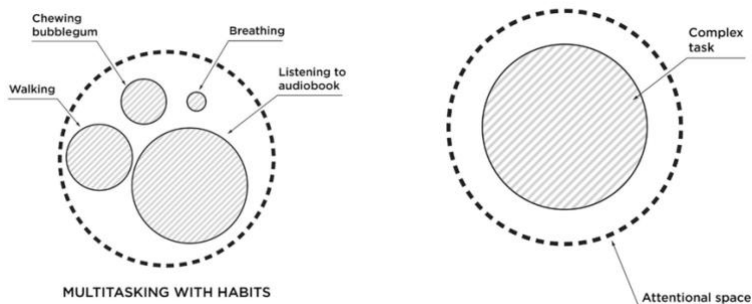
(Table taken from Hyperfocus by Chris Bailey)





IDEA 6: ATTENTIONAL SPACE – LIMITS TO OUR ATTENTION

Another powerful construct from Chris Bailey’s book – “Hyperfocus” is the notion of *Attentional Space*. It’s a limited resource. We dilute it by filling it with a lot of things – we can choose to use this resource by filling our Attentional Space with the task we want to focus on and remove all other distractions.



(Diagrams taken from Hyperfocus by Chris Bailey)

IDEA 7: THE ILLUSION OF MULTITASKING

- Multitasking is an illusion that reduces the effectiveness of anything you are trying to get done. Even the presence of a phone on the table during the conversation deteriorates the quality of conversation. Anything that distracts you that will take your attention away.
- There are a very few things that one can effectively multitask. e.g. Drive and listen to an audiobook or walk and chew gum at the same time. However, anything you do, in addition to your primary task will take away your attentional space.

IDEA 8: SWAMIJI’S METHOD IN WRITING BOOKS

- Swamiji has written 15 books in the last 5 years. He goes into solitude for a week with no distractions and completes the first draft of the book, the next week is for editing and then it goes into publication review.
- When we are in solitude, our mind taps into the energy of the universe and it can come with great ideas and our creativity resonates with that of the universal creativity.

IDEA 9: CREATE A ZONE WHERE CREATIVITY THRIVES

- If one tries to recollect what three articles have, we read most recently – most of us cannot recall it. This is the state of distraction we live in.
- Our discovery, our insights- comes when our inner world is connected with the outer world. Its only possible when we I can do one thing at a time. Swamiji has a philosophy – take one thing at a time and do it very well before we take one something else.





IDEA 10: OUR ATTENTION CREATES OUR REALITY

- It's our ability to pay attention to anything that creates the "Sense of Reality" for us. The innate tendencies of human mind are so ingrained in us that we are prone to being distracted no matter how smart or clever we are.
- Quality Time, when we spend with our close family, should be characterized by given them our full attention. It hardly qualifies as Quality Time if we have a laptop in between a conversation.

IDEA 11: TREAT YOUR ATTENTION LIKE WEALTH

- One of the worst things we can do is to try to do too many things at once. Many of us fall for this and take on too many things.
- Our attention is like Wealth – Every time you give your attention to something – you are giving away a tangible resource. Your Attention is the cost you pay to acquire something in your consciousness. What we pay attention to – becomes part of our consciousness. Whether its negative or positive things -whatever we pay attention to, you will imbibe.

IDEA 12: JACK MA'S 9 RABBITS

- Jack Ma – the founder of Ali Baba said that you really have to pay attention to the one thing you want to accomplish. Imagine trying to catch 9 rabbits in a pen – you cannot succeed unless you focus on grabbing one rabbit at a time. Otherwise you will be chasing all of them all over all the pen.
- When the company is growing – its tempting to say that we can do this *AND* that *AND* something else too. As soon as you split your focus and fragment your vision – you are already in trouble.

IDEA 13: DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LARGE AND SMALL BUSINESS

- Imagine you are running a business with 12 million revenue stream. Which means every month you oversee 1 million revenue stream or roughly 50,000 per day or around \$5000 per hour. Make sure you spend these hours and your time on the topics that really need your attention.
- The main difference between large and small businesses is purely the difference in their ability to sell their products and services. Your ability to grow the business depends in the quality of your products and your ability to pay focus on the customers, products and sales.

IDEA 14: VISION, SALES, FOCUS

- Like the founder of DoorBot, James Siminoff – which later was renamed to RING and acquired by Amazon for \$1 Billion dollars. You will meet cynics, you will meet critics, but what matters is what you know in your gut and keep following your dream. If you are clear where you are headed – you can listen to others but wont pivot and divert your focus.
- *Vision* is "what one sees", *Sales* is "what will it take to get there" and *Focus* is "How I will get there".





IDEA 15: WESTFIELD ANECDOTE – SPENDING MONEY OR MAKING MONEY?

- Swamiji used to work for Westfield Corporation, a billion-dollar Australian giant. One day at an executive retreat, he was tapped on his shoulder by Frank Lowy, the founder and chairman of Westfield Corp. He asked him, “*Are you spending my money or making me money?*”
- Frank Lowy has distilled business as simple as that – Business can either spend money or make money and should focus on profitable growth. Sales is like Water Supply to your home. If a business is not generating revenue something is wrong and it could likely be lack of focus.

IDEA 16: FIVE AREAS TO FOCUS ON

- **Focus on Customers:** If the customers have trusted you, one shouldn’t be in a place where you have to say sorry. It doesn’t matter what your internal problem is – the customer shouldn’t have to reduce their expectations of you, and you need to consistently deliver high value to them.
- **Focus on Prospective Customers:** Any sound company should have a future sales pipeline. Once Swamiji sat down his team and told them that he needs to be on the road meeting prospective customers, or they will not have a company. He then focused on generating new business and stayed outside the office 4 days a week and 1 day in office. Even if you have customer facing managers there is no substitute for understanding the reality that customers are facing, and one cannot afford to take the relationships with customers for granted.
- **Focus on your Product:** Sales can sell , but if the product has deficiencies then you wont have customers for too long. Swamiji used to run Standup meetings very focused on product issues with RAG System – Red/Amber/Green – The meetings used to be run on a tight schedule and everyone knew where the product was headed.
- **Focus on Employees:** It’s a common mistake for entrepreneurs to have their friends working for them. The friends being of same age, same background, same thinking as you, bring no newness to the company. If your employees do not have a fire in their belly, you will spend a lot of time emotionally cajoling them. Company has to run like a business. Everyone should know that it’s a war, everyone must be focused, leave socializing to outside. Hire Top Performers – get rid of Marginal Performers who will endanger the entire company. Its your job to make the whole enterprise strong. Don’t allow weak links to persist and get rid of the weak link in the chain.
- **Focus on core business:** One may have many activities which generate some revenue – but make up your mind on where you want to be focused. In Japan, people practice Souji – Art of Cleaning – once a year, they gather all moveable objects and put all them in center of the house and get rid of all





everything which is not necessary for new beginnings. Similarly – look at all things, focus on most important and get rid of unimportant.

IDEA 17: MEDITATION TO HELP SEE GORILLA IN THE CROWD OR FOREST FOR TREES

- While we focus on critical things – as leaders we also need to have Awareness of everything that is critical to our business. Many people in focusing too narrowly sometimes miss the man masked as Gorilla in plain sight. Or we miss the forest for the trees – Lose track of big picture.
- Meditation helps one in having attention and point our focus and helps increase our Attention in general. Mindfulness is in fact increased Attention with Awareness.

Change the tactic. Don't change the rabbit.

Notes compiled by a lovely student in Om Swami's "Walk the Dragon" Leadership Program.

P.S. The student wishes to remain anonymous.

