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Focus Beats Brilliance... Every Time

by Keith F. Luscher
Author, *Prospect & Flourish*

Brilliance, talent, ability, skill...call it whatever you like. It's important, but brilliance alone will not create ongoing growth or success.

A famous coach once said, "If I have to choose between the player who is high on skill, but low on discipline, and the player who is low on skill, but high on discipline, I will take the latter, because I can make him a star."

Indeed, most successful people will be the first to admit that they are not brilliant, but they are focused, and that focus helps them maintain discipline. (In fact, they often surround themselves with brilliant people to make up the difference!) This is what is meant by the expression, "Focus Beats Brilliance."

In his classic book, *Selling the Invisible*, author Harry Beckwith gives several examples—including Sears Roebuck and Bill Clinton's first presidential campaign—of how focus makes the difference. "In everything from campaigns for peanuts to campaigns for presidents," Beckwith says, "focus wins."

Author and speaker Jim McCarty tells the story of a furniture store chain that closed their Houston locations. Despite their competitive prices and monthly sales events, business was poor. Consequently, up went the Going Out of Business signs. Windows were soaped with promises of great savings and young people were hired to flag down passing cars at each location and beckon folks to come in and buy.

Thousands of dollars were spent as newspaper, radio and TV ads promoted the big event. People packed the stores! Fascinated, Jim stopped and inquired one of the flaggers, "How is business going?"

She responded, "Great, now that we are finally asking people to buy!"

"So, focus on what?" You may ask.

Focus on one message. Focus on activity that fuels business and not busy-ness (In our office that's called "gettin' ready to get ready." Been there, done that!). Focus on doing one thing that creates definite value for your customers and prospects—one thing that you do better than anyone else.

Rhonda Crowe of Quest For Best Coaching & Consulting, pegs the value of focus this way. She's a business coach who specializes in preparing nurses for growing responsibilities in health care administration and management. She doesn't teach sales, nor does she venture outside her industry of expertise. "I'm an RN; I have worked in health care throughout my career. That's my focus. I look at it this way: by narrowing my focus, I am actually casting a wider net."

Touché. By focusing her expertise on knowing what she can do and for whom she can do it, by default Rhonda focuses her message as well. This enables her to focus her activity on networking with people who can help connect her with others who specifically need her services.

Don't let the strained economy cause you to try to be all things to all people. Focus on doing what you do best, and make room for others to do what they do best. Get your focused message down (keep it pithy) and stick to it.

And remember: Focus beats brilliance...every time!