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CHUCK TALK: Willingness to change course as important as determination

BY CHUCK MACHE

There's a story about a golfer who steps up to the tee box and hits a wicked duck hook out of bounds. Embarrassed, he reaches in his pocket, tees up another ball and again, hits another horrific twisting shot out of bounds. Now angry and determined, he walks back to his bag, gets another ball, tees it up again, and duplicates his first two shots out of bounds. In a fit of frustration, he slams his club into his bag, aggressively flings his bag over his shoulders, mumbles some choice expletives to himself and heads up the fairway uncertain of where he's going to drop a ball to make his next shot.

I use this as an analogy when discussing people who are determined to be successful yet continue to fail. People like:

- The sales person who is working extremely hard, is not bringing in sales and makes this decision: work even harder
- The manager who has a tight grip on his team but cannot get them to take their game to the next level so he implements even more controls
- The leader of a company not reaching its numbers who meets endlessly with her team to discuss solutions but keeps asking the same questions over and over again to the same people, never getting outside opinions

So, in these examples, what's missing? You certainly can't fault their determination, can you? Their persistence, assertiveness and even aggressiveness are to be admired, right? Well, yes and no.

You must be determined to rise to a challenge. But determination on a stand-alone basis doesn't solve problems. I encounter many people in sales, operations, management and leadership roles who are very determined people. They are successful on many levels, yet many are also struggling to break through to new levels and have hit a wall in terms of how to get there. Usually it is because the very thing that got them this far, their determination, is missing a key ingredient – the willingness to make intelligent changes along the way.

People who make personal and business-related breakthroughs of any significance are first and foremost determined individuals. However, inside their determination is the ability to learn from their actions and constantly change those actions until they reach their desired goal. Their determination is fueled by their willingness to make intelligent changes and adjustments along the way.

Try doing these five things:

- Write down the goal that you want to achieve and list the obstacles or roadblocks that are keeping you

from reaching it.

- Brainstorm three new ways to get around the roadblocks. Make sure they're things you've never tried before. Run your ideas by someone you have confidence in, and see if they can add to or give you any new ideas. Better yet, meet with someone who has achieved the goal you are after.
- Turn the three best ideas into actual strategies, and prioritize them with the most important coming first. Be bold and take some risks outside of your comfort zone.
- Put tactics behind those three strategies. Be detailed on the things you have to do to implement your strategies.
- Start with your best strategy, and implement with pure determination. If that doesn't work, move on to the second one and so on. If you've exhausted the three best ideas and still have not achieved your goal, make a list of three more and repeat the process, making intelligent changes.

Successful people that I encounter have a "crack-the-code" mentality. Like the golfer used in the example, if you're duck hooking the ball off the tee – change your grip, your stance, your back swing, something. Don't do the same thing harder and expect different results. Fuel your determination with intelligent change along the way.

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