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In the New Year, tip the scale in your favor

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With the rapid pace of change all around us these days and the constant drumbeat of crises, it is easy to fall into the Nike trap of management: Just Do It! Just do something! Just do anything!

We all remember playing the childhood game Don't Spill the Beans at least once in our life. The concept is easy: You compete against an opponent by carefully considering how to place beans on your half of a balanced bean pot in order to tip the pot toward your opponent so he gets all of those rotten beans.

The game of business is similar. A great organization knows how to place its "beans" in order to achieve success. When talking about customers or profit, we want the pot to tip in our direction. In regards to bad-collection issues or supplier-time delays, we want the pot to tip away.

Now don't get me wrong, I am a mass-and-velocity kind of guy but, let's make sure the things we are doing are those that will make a difference — a difference in our favor — in the long-term viability of our businesses. When we look at companies that succeed in good and bad times, they focus on the points below.

1. Commit to an abundance mindset, not one of scarcity. No company becomes great without leaders who believe there is more than enough for them to become successful.

2. Have a portable mission and vision. Being portable means that your mission and vision for your company is short and concise enough for your team and your customers to take with them. In short, this means that your mission and vision needs to be a couple of sentences so it can easily be repeated. Why repeat it? Because, simply, you need to wear it in your heart and have it written plainly on your forehead.

3. Focus on constant improvement by asking your customers their needs, wants and desires. The only way you are going to sell more products or services is by gaining more market share, which means you have to sell what people want.

4. Use the language and lessons of “Good to Great.” If you have not read this book by Jim Collins or it has been a while since you last read it, take the time now to make it your own.

5. Hold everyone on your team accountable, including yourself, to well-established goals and principals.

6. Replace employees with “team members” and groups or committees with “teams.” Language is important to building a culture of success. The players on the Detroit Tigers are all employees of the Tigers Baseball organization, but you would never hear them called employees. Everyone on the payroll at Disney is a Cast Member. Does that reinforce their role? Absolutely.

7. Invest in your people. You cannot coach a soccer team for 4-year-olds these days without some sort of ongoing training. Yet, we let people in our organizations deal with our customers with very little upfront training and almost no follow-up. How can you say your business is important when you don’t invest in the people who will determine your success or failure?

8. Delegate to talent not titles. It is too easy and, to be honest, lazy, to delegate to people based on their titles or time in service. Use this year to learn, I mean really learn, the talents of your people, and then help them maximize their use of those talents.

9. Quit. That is, quit trying to be everything. You have to also learn your talents and then do those things that are in your sweet spot. You will get more done and have more joy in doing it.

10. Invest in your team. When baseball players go to spring training, they spend the first few weeks working on themselves, then they begin to work as a team. Treat your organization’s team no differently. Once you have invested in the individual members of your team, you must help them come together and learn to perform as a fluid group.

11. Take time to think. Great leaders commit real amounts of time to think and focus on the future of their business. If you are going to drive your success, you must first commit time to study your road map.

Change is constant. There will always be good times and bad times. Some companies will succeed — some won’t.

You are in position to determine your future. So, what is it going to be? What difference are you going to make? Tip the scale in your favor.

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