



The Speed of Life and What it Means to YOU!

By Tony Jeary

The speed of life is a global condition that presents a strategic challenge for everyone. The speed of life combines excessive amounts of unrefined information with a glut of choices and opportunities and presents itself in the form of confusion and distraction! How well we function within this constant condition determines value, competitive advantage and the ability to create results that will convert a vision or a dream into reality. These issues are always important but in tough economic times they are absolutely critical to success.

The speed of life can't be stopped but it can be understood and leveraged in a positive way. It is a fact that knowledge and information have always been a cornerstone of power, influence and achievement! However, the speed of life generates so much information it creates distractions that unwittingly lead people into well-intentioned busyness. It is a form of busyness that marginalizes results. The solution is to identify and deploy high leverage activities that harness the right information at the right time and focus on action that will move the results needle!

The only thing certain about the speed of life is uncertainty. It is impossible to accurately forecast future conditions over a long period of time and an approach based on the principle of 'going as far as you can see – so that you can see farther' is needed. Such a strategy is created by concentrating on the three strategic issues that matter most: Clarity, Focus, and Execution.

CLARITY

If you have no cohesive vision there is little chance of achieving sustained success in a bad economy. Think about this: Most organizations have adopted vision and mission statements; however, many within those organizations find it difficult to articulate the vision or mission, without reading it. This condition is typical and may be evidence that there is no real clarity about the vision and how to achieve it. Unless there is clarity regarding a vision – there is no vision!

When businesses have clarity concerning their vision it lives! It also creates zeal and passion for the commitment and determination needed to execute the vision. The vision itself becomes able to pull everyone forward. The pulling effect is created because clarity impacts people at the level of belief and produces voluntary change in attitudes and behavior.

Clarity is achieved when we have an unfettered view of our vision and understand what we really want, why we want it, the value of doing it and the highest purpose for doing it!

FOCUS

Focus is the opposite of distraction! At the speed of life, success hinges on the ability to cut through the clutter and focus on the high leverage activities that directly impact results. Focus is not something that comes naturally for most people, and that is why it is a skill that must be learned, polished, and practiced. Specifically, focus is a thinking skill that is acquired as a result of mental discipline.

Because the human mind serves as a connector of facts and information, fresh input is the raw material of creativity, opportunity recognition and problem solving. The mind is always hungry for new information because it stimulates thought and is fulfilling. Unfortunately, basic process of thinking provides the opportunity for distraction. Distraction is always the path of least resistance and the most natural activity for the mind to embrace. The speed of life offers up scores of opportunities each day that lure us into distractions that gobble time.

Between today's conditions and tomorrows hope is a gap that must be crossed. In that gap is every goal, objective and action step that must be taken to be successful. Achieving focus is a matter of identifying the high-leverage activities in the gap that powerfully impact results and developing the mental skills to insure they receive the time they deserve.

EXECUTION

The ability to persuade others has a direct impact on achieving superior results, faster, which is what the speed of life demands. As we gain clarity and develop our focusing skills, the need to concentrate on high-leverage activities becomes paramount. However, identifying and focusing on those activities is only the beginning. Once our high-leverage activities are known the challenge of actually doing them becomes the issue. People must be persuaded to focus on these activities and to act quickly! This always involves exceeding expectations.

There is more to exceeding expectations than adopting the idea as a strategy. Exceeding expectations has its greatest impact when it is adopted by individuals as a way of life. When you have a group of people who are willing to exceed expectations in the normal course of their daily activity a powerful force for superior results is created.

People in businesses and organizations are persuaded to exceed expectations based on the positive strategic presence of their leadership team. Leaders create images of influence in the minds of those they lead and those images define the organizational perception of leadership. It is this overall persona that creates what I call Strategic Presence. Leaders are constantly creating positive and negative Strategic Presence based on their values and their behavior. The most important fact about Strategic Presence is that it produces two possible reactions in others. It either produces voluntary cooperation or it produces various forms of resistance. If the Strategic Presence of leadership is highly positive, people will be more likely to support the vision of leadership. If the Strategic Presence of leadership is negative, people will not be willing to exceed expectations. They may actually try to undermine the goals of leadership!

The key to persuasion is Strategic Presence and the ability to communicate strategically is the foundation for both. Organizations frequently treat communication as a collection of skills, or just another training or coaching objective. This idea represents a tactical approach to communication. If execution can be seen as a train rolling down a track to a predetermined destination, communication is the engine that powers the train! If you can't communicate effectively you will not execute effectively