

## The Power of Focus

Where I live, there's at least fifteen college and pro games on TV every fall weekend. What lessons can we learn that can be applied to our business?

Each successful coach focuses on the 3-4 really important things they must execute well to win their game. It could be establishing a passing game, establishing a strong running game, pressuring the opponent's quarterback, special team play or ball control just to name a few. Around these major focus areas, they develop a series of offensive and defensive tactics.

In football, these tactics begin with 15-20 pre-scripted plays they use at the start of their game. The selection and design of these plays is based on careful study and analysis by the coaches of their competitor's performance over the past few games. Game videos and offensive and defensive patterns are studied in detail to assess competitive strengths, weaknesses and their strategy.

### Business Application

In business, we can use the same approach and base our operating plan on a focused series of strategic initiatives to beat our competition. Then create a series of tactics to execute these initiatives. To start, identify the 3-4 key things that your business must do to be successful this year.

When I look back over my business career, the years that were most successful were the one's where I focused all my effort on a small group of strategic initiatives. I avoided getting distracted by less important initiatives that were not critical to our success.

### Success Story

I'd like to share a real life lesson to demonstrate the power of focus. Several years ago, there was a \$100M+ high tech business that manufactured and sold a large number of products and technologies to multiple customers around the world. This business was hemorrhaging for several years and losing \$20-30M annually with no end in sight.

The business president decided to refocus on a smaller product portfolio that had competitive advantage, growth potential and could be profitable. Then he decided to sell these products only in selected markets to customers who were profitable. He simplified the portfolio to 3 product groups that were sold to large customers in only 8 countries around the world. The business result was breakeven in year one and \$8M profit in year two with a strong base to profitably expand and grow the business.