

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute.

I'm going to talk about goal achievement today, and I've talked about this a few times in the recent past. And many of you are aware that I had a set goal of winning a Gold Ball, which is indicative of winning one of the four national championships in my age group, that I had set probably a year and a half ago now. But what I wanted to relate with everybody are the lessons I've learned now having gone down this road toward this goal over the last year and a half.

First of all, I think the first thing I've learned, and the first thing to remember is goals really are critical to achievement. When you set a vision of where you want to go, that really sets the table for your accomplishments. It gives you the what, it gives you the how, and causes you to then set a road map to get there. And I think really setting that vision, setting those goals is critical to any kind of great accomplishments that you want to have. The second lesson, I found that while goals are supposed to be specific in the so-called smart goals, one of the words there is specific, and my goal was very specific. But what I learned is, success and achievement are maybe not so specific or not so easily defined. And that may sound like a cop out because I didn't achieve my goal, that goal, that particular goal.

So, what's interesting though is I've gotten to this point in the road, or you would say the end of the road since my goal was really for this current year, and I didn't win the Gold Ball. However, I did accomplish three things that weren't even on my radar, some of which maybe are even more important. So just to enlighten you. So, I ended up number three in the United States in 70 and over singles, and that was much higher than I'd ever been rated, ranked at year-end and was not among my goals that I had set or even my sub goals I had set. Also, not even on my radar at the time I set these goals, I didn't even think about playing the World Championships, which were held in Mallorca this fall. But I went over to Mallorca, and I participated in the World Championships, and I ended up making the finals of doubles at the World Championships, which was a whole lot of fun and a really cool accomplishment.

But again, not my specific goal, but an accomplishment that at the end of the day that wasn't even on my radar and really was cool. And almost like the Olympics, they get you up on the podiums and they put a silver medal over you, kind of cool. Most importantly, and it's something that I actually had had as sort of a background goal for the last 25 years, but not one of the goals I set for myself, maybe because I was afraid, I might not achieve it, but I actually got invited to play for the national team this next year. Each year, there's a world team championship, and four players from each country get invited. So, I get to where the red, white, and blue of the USA and play for the USA in Turkey this coming year. And that blows getting a Gold Ball right out of the water in terms of goals, so.

So, my point here is that when you set out for a specific goal, you may or may not hit that exact thing. But goals are supposed to be specific, and I think it helped having this specific goal. But at the end of the day, the other things you accomplish, and really, it's the journey that probably counts more than anything. So, all of that is great. So yes, the goal should be specific, but the results may be just beneficial and not to your specific goal that you set. Coming back to goal achievement, I definitely learned there's no substitute for hard work. And most importantly, it takes hard work to change habits. And better habits produce better results. And that's just as simple as can be, but that does not come easily. Changing habits does not come easily at all.

Next lesson learned, and this definitely applies, I think, to any level of leadership, and certainly in construction, good coaching can increase the effectiveness of hard work. So doing the hard work is one thing, but getting some good coaching will increase the effectiveness. Why? Because you're going to work on the right things in the right way. And alone, you're not so sure you can see clearly your own weaknesses, or what has to change, or what habits are good and bad and all of that. But a little bit of coaching can get you on the right path to change those habits. And so, it just makes the hard work more effective and maybe gets you there sooner too.

Very important to gauge progress, frequently. I set one goal, but there's a whole period of time here where you could lose enthusiasm, get disheartened and all of those things. But when you gauge progress frequently, that helps keep the enthusiasm, the passion going to sustain the hard work and sustain the progress, and even alter the plan if you're partway down the road and what you're doing is not getting the results you want. Very important, most targets are moving targets. All right. What do I mean by that? Well, when I set out to accomplish my goal, I looked at the people I had to beat and do better than, and I thought, wow, I can improve enough that I can do that. What I failed to realize is all of those people were trying to improve also. And strangely enough, at least several of them were working as hard as I was to maintain their stature and maintain their place as I was working to supplant them.

So, I got my skills to where they wanted to be, but when I got there, I found out that the other guys were a little better. Kind of an interesting thing and something that had not occurred to me beforehand that it's a moving target. But if you think about your business goals, whether you're going to try to get a new customer, you're going to try to achieve this amount of profitability or whatever, well, you got competitors out there. Competitors for future employees, competitors for future work. They're out there trying to do the same thing. And yes, they got goals and they're working hard too. So, it's never a stagnant place that you're going to. So, when you set out your roadmap to get there, getting there is not really there. It's here because when you get there, the bar will have moved slightly. So very important thing, if you want to achieve your goals, you got to set your target at perhaps a little higher than you actually see it being achieved right now. Kind of interesting.

And the promised land for achieving your goals, by the way, is not magical, it's satisfying. And in fact, I'd say what's interesting, we talk about a BHAG sometimes, a big hairy audacious goal. And maybe my goal for the Gold Ball was a BHAG, but what I found is there's a lot of level up there of achievement below what I got that's really cool. It's not magical, but it's certainly very satisfying. But it's also only a resting place because as soon as you get to a new status quo, now where do you go from here? You got to take the next step. This is a just a new place where you are, so. I'm really happy in my tennis goals and certainly making the USA team. That is just, that I guess is magical. But now where do I go from here? And as it is with all goals, it's a never-ending pathway forward, right? So, once you hit one status quo, you're looking for the new change.

Dennis Engelbrecht, Family Business Institute. Good luck with all of your pursuits.