

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.

Today, I want to talk about momentum. I watched a couple of sporting events this weekend where you really, you can see momentum shift and take on a force, and it's like once one team's got there, one player's got that momentum, it's like the huge rock rolling downhill. It just isn't able to be stopped. But then on the other hand, I think, "Is that a real thing? Momentum?" Because okay, if I win the next point, do I now have momentum? Isn't it just who won the last point? Well, is it or isn't it? Is momentum a real thing? And if so, how do you get it in your business and keep it in your business and have momentum work for you in your construction company? So, is it a real thing? Webster defines it as strength or force gained by motion or by a series of events.

And I think you can see that if you watch a sporting event, it might be a turnover in football, a fumble, or an interception, often one of the things that seems to change the momentum of those games. In physics, it's a very real thing, of course. It's defined very clearly, and it's measured. It's a product of mass and velocity. And Newton's law, an object in motion tends to stay in motion. So that's physics, that's real momentum. In business, Jim Collins in *Good to Great* talked about the flywheel effect, and that's really talking about momentum. And as you can imagine that flywheel effect, you think about this giant gear that you get turning, and once you get it turning, it's pretty hard to stop it. It wants to keep turning. And that's really the force of momentum, if you will, the physics defined force of momentum.

But in an organization, what Jim Collins was talking about really was the trajectory of the business or aspects of the business. And I'm going to say momentum's only a real thing if that trajectory is sustainable and repeatable if there's a true force behind it. Otherwise, just because I won the last game or the last point or the last job, that doesn't mean I have momentum. That was just a win. That doesn't mean I'm going to win the next one, but that flywheel effect is something that hopefully has a force that keeps going forward. So, two things I think really create momentum. The first, going back to Jim Collins, might be just the blocking and tackling, using another sports metaphor, of the business; the skills, the process, the procedure, the execution, doing the little things that lead to success. If as a construction company you do all of those little things well and you do them consistently, you're more likely to have success.

And I think in Jim Collins' study in *Good To Great*, that's really what he witnessed, is these greatest companies did the little things. They did the blocking and tackling, and they did it so consistently and so well that it created momentum for the business that basically they were going to have continued success for some period of time. And I think that's really the real, one of the two real things that creates momentum, is having that consistent process procedure, and that goes along with good people and skills and all of that as well. The second aspect of momentum, though, is clearly psychological. All right? So, what happens if I'm playing tennis and I feel I have the momentum? What does that really mean? Well, I think what it means is I've got a relaxed confidence, if you will. And with that confidence, I'm able to perform more freely, perform better.

And to contrast that, let's think of lack of confidence. All right? When I lack confidence, I might get tight, I might not swing as freely, I don't have the confidence to try certain shots, things like that. And I think the same thing happens to your project managers, to really everybody in your organization. Confidence, belief, hope. Those are the things that really create a psychological momentum and allow people to perform their best as they go forward. And I think there's also an external aspect to that as well. So, the momentum that you may have as a business may be felt outside of your business. It's a reputational momentum perhaps. And I'll go back to another sports thing. So if any of you watched the finals of the US Open tennis this week, you might've seen a really strange statistic, which is that Novak Djokovic had won 16 of his last 17 tiebreakers in Grand Slam events.

Now, they faced a tiebreaker during this final, and don't you think that opponent going in there knows that Djokovic won 16 of his last 17 tiebreakers in Grand Slam events? So, what is he thinking? He's thinking, "Oh, I'm in trouble." And what's

Djokovic thinking? He's thinking, "I got this." So, you have that psychological advantage that comes with that reputational piece. And so, what can leaders do? Well, the first thing I want to talk about is you can't take momentum for granted because it is easily lost in an instant. Again, you see it in a football game oftentimes with a turnover or something like that. One team's just steamrolling, something happens, and all of a sudden, it just turns. Oftentimes, it's in the last two minutes when they go into prevent defense. But momentum can change very quickly. And business could be the loss of a key employee, or you get a bad job, or all of a sudden, you're seconds in your bidding six straight times and you're not winning work.

It can change on a dime. So, what can you do? So going back to Jim Collins, preparation, planning, solid process, training skills, all of those things are things that you can have as that blocking and tackling that can drive that momentum. And then when you hit an obstacle along the way, it doesn't stop you. You tend to keep going. You tend to be able to handle that. As a leader, make sure your people are confident and energized. People are moody and people have good days and bad days, and they're going to operate better when they have that quiet confidence. Now, overconfidence, that can be the same as taking it for granted. So confident but not overconfident, but you can see where your people are and it's up to you to hopefully manage and help your people through their tough spots and get them back on top.

How you handle pitfalls and mistakes in your business is a huge thing for momentum. When that mistake happens, it can completely turn that momentum. But if you jump in and you say, "Hey, we got this," or in some cases, you take the blame off of other people, "Hey, not your fault. We didn't prepare you properly for that. We didn't give you the support. That's on me. Now, let's go up, but we've got this solution. We've got it from here, and we're going again." But that can look a lot different if you handle that mistake differently, and you end up with blame and people pointing fingers and can make a real momentum change in your culture, your organization, and even your results. You probably haven't put momentum on your list of your duties. It's probably not in your job description, but maybe it should be part of your daily process to your daily job to assess where are the various areas in our company, where do they need me to provide support, inspiration, change to either create momentum, change momentum, sustain momentum, all of those things.

Close this one with a quote from Vince Lombardi, the legendary football coach of the Green Bay Packers said, "Confidence is contagious. So is the lack of confidence." So, think about that. I think that's really the core of momentum, is momentum really psychologically deals with confidence. And those with confidence can maintain that momentum. And when you lose confidence, that's really the essence of losing momentum. So, there you go.

Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.