

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.

Today I want to talk about the essence of competition. From past blogs and things I've written, most of you are probably aware I've been on this sort of obsessive quest to win a Gold Ball, which essentially means winning one of the four national tournaments in my age group for tennis. And I've learned a lot about goal achievement along the way and tried to share some of those things, among which was having a worthy goal, making sure that goal is communicated to all that are going to be affected by it or whose help you'll need by it. Having a solid plan to achieve that goal. Remembering that goal achievement is a crooked road, it is not a linear path for sure. So, you got to persevere and oftentimes re-plan or toss out the old plan and start with a new plan.

What I've found now is some different things because now I've made it to where I'm competitive to achieve my goal. I'm at or near the top and up against the best players each time I play now. And of course, there's only one winner, which brings us back to the essence of competition, which I wanted to talk about. So, each of you, of course, your business is competing on a regular basis. What is the essence of competition and how do you win once you get there and you're competing against very good quality competitors?

And what I've found, at least on the tennis side, is your strategy in each match or against each player is always a little bit different. How are they going to come at me? How am I going to come at them? How are their shots going to be effective against me? And vice versa. Who's going to be able to land the better shots? We each have strengths and weaknesses that we're trying to display, of course, our strengths and maybe overshadow our weaknesses a little bit. But of course, our opponents are out there trying to outdo us each time we do. And when we arrive at time for whether it's a presentation or a bid or wherever, where your competition gets to its essence, who's going to be able to bring their A game that day?

What I'm finding in tennis, you're there and somebody brings their A game, and the other person doesn't quite bring their A game, and what's the difference there? And how can you be a winner more often? Once at this top or at the pinnacle, how can you then be successful? And of course, as I think back upon it, if you're well practiced and well prepared, of course, that's an essential element. Of course, you have to make sure that you don't overdo it too. In tennis you got to practice enough, but if you practice too much, you'll be tired, you'll have tired legs, you won't be at your best when you get there as well. And certainly, if you're practicing a presentation, you don't want to become rote, you want it to seem fresh and enthusiastic and all of that. The same thing can happen that you can actually be over practiced, but you do need to be practiced and prepared.

Funny thing in tennis at this level is, okay, these are all week competitions. You're playing multiple matches in multiple days. You got to know what to eat, how to eat, when to eat, when to hydrate, when to rehydrate, all of these things. You have to be able to stand up mentally against the challenges that arise. Just last tournament, we got rained out for our 8:00 final, and we ended up playing our final in the heat of the day with a different sun at 11:30 AM, and these are different things. Plus, you sit around them for three hours and you still got to come up and then feel physically good and all of that.

The same thing happens to you when you're in competition. You arrive at a presentation, and something doesn't work, or the room's not set up the way you thought it was going to be set up or all of a sudden they lob a difficult question that you weren't expecting over the bow or something like that. And you got to handle it on game day. So, you got to be able to stand up against tough conditions, unexpected stuff. Last tournament, I got what I perceived was a bad call from my competitor late in the match, which would've been very important. So how do you handle that mentally? When you get in a difficult situation are you able to maintain and still again compete and hopefully persevere?

So, each of these things I'm doing in tennis kind of be a metaphor for the way you compete in business. But it really does boil down to the essence of competition, and that never leaves us in business like it's never leaving me in tennis. The essence of competition is you've got to bring it every day and you've got to bring your best every day. You've got to work

on both your strengths and your weaknesses, and you've got to try to differentiate yourself from your competition. You got to try to be a little bit better in some areas or a lot better in some areas. You have to make sure that your weaknesses don't stand out, that they can find them and put you in a box with your weaknesses. So, it really is the essence of competition, and it is about bringing every day, being prepared and continuing to work. And then if you do so, hopefully you find the success you're looking for.

Again, Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.