

Hi, this is Wayne Rivers at FBI, and *We Build Better Contractors*.

Our next Boot Camp is the end of March, in Raleigh. March 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. Seats are going fast, jump in there quickly, please, and get your folks enrolled.

This week, I want to talk about where CEOs should focus in a tumultuous age. You've heard Dennis and I talk about our friend Arlin and we get his daily blog, and he had a great one on January the 19<sup>th</sup>. And he said that business owners, leaders are struggling to know how to focus during these seemingly chaotic times. So, what should a CEO or owner focus on, which is ultimately what the company needs to be concerned with? That got me thinking, "Hmm, tumultuous age."

It is strange right now, I think, after all that's gone on in the last couple of years. But I also thought... Arlin listed 10 different things that CEOs need to be focusing on right now. I said, "Hmm, this seems familiar." So, I went back to my book from 2009, *The Eight Building Blocks For Creating a Sustainable Closely Held Business*, and I found my 10 things for what CEOs should focus on.

Now, if you think about 2009, wasn't that a tumultuous time, the great recession? No, it wasn't a great depression, but it was the greatest recession in my lifetime, that's for sure, and most of yours as well. And we had to relearn some hard lessons. We had to do some serious belt-tightening. And all of us wondered if our companies were going to survive. We had to take dramatic steps at FBI to survive, in order to live and fight another day.

So, what are the 10 things that I said CEOs should be focused on? And then what did Arlin add to that in today's terms that might be even more appropriate?

The first thing is... I'll just run down this list. The first thing is the leader needs to be the keeper of the vision of the company. All right? Second, codify and protect the values of the company. Third, be the grand master of corporate strategy.

Those first three go together, right? So, you've got to have a vision. You've got to have your company values and the mission, of course. You've got to be the grand master of corporate strategy.

And then number four, you got to communicate those things, the vision, the values, the strategy. You've got to communicate that until you're blue in the face so that everybody in your organization knows it.

The fifth thing, you have to be the bird-dogger and the evaluator of talent. In 2009, that was important. Is it important today? Yes, absolutely, more so, even.

And the sixth thing, you have to be the charismatic and authoritative spokesman for the company. Some people go out and hire PR people to do this because they're not comfortable in front of a camera or they're not comfortable in front of a group. That's okay. If you're not that authoritative, charismatic spokesperson for your company, find somebody on your team who can be.

The seventh thing. Leaders need to be the personification of teamwork. You've got to demonstrate teamwork. You expect your people to work in teams and collaborate effectively, and if you don't demonstrate that at the highest level of the organization, it's not going to trickle down. People won't believe in you if you're not personifying that very characteristic of teamwork.

The next thing, advocate for the customer and customer service. Somebody's got to make sure that everybody in the company is focused on what's ultimately important and that's having customers and having happy, in fact, delighted customers.

The ninth thing, custodian of the corporate cash. The CEO needs to absolutely be focused on the company's cash health at all times.

And the tenth and last thing for me was mediator of high-level disputes and dissatisfactions in the organization. One thing about a construction is it draws strong personalities. And if you've got two or three, or four strong personalities among your leadership group, they're going to be advocating for different things at different times. So, the CEO needs to be able to mediate that and help coalesce those ideas into something that's actionable and fits into the corporate strategy.

Now, where did I miss? What did Arlin say in his list that I missed? A couple of things.

Leadership development. That's a big whiff for me. You could say it's under bird-dogger and evaluator of talent, because not only must you get talent, you must develop talent. But I didn't really elucidate on that very much in my writing.

Finding growth opportunities through M&A. Arlin works primarily in the IT business where M&A is super-hot. It's not quite as hot in the construction industry yet. It might be yet.

And finally, innovation. He includes innovation in his top 10 and taking time to think outside the box.

So, listen to the way he closed this. I could never have written this any better than he did. "When the world seems out of control, that's not the time to go dark or quiet with your team. They're looking for your direction and sense of stability. Even if there isn't a lot to provide that foundation, strong business practices work no matter the circumstances. Doing the right thing is always the right thing. There are a number of truths that we just need to keep front and center and push the rest of the chaos to the side."

So, whether it's 2009 and the great recession or whether it's 2022 and the aftereffects of a pandemic, chaos is always a fact in business. I'd like to hear what you think. What did we leave out? What did I leave out or what did Arlin leave out, in terms of what are the top 10 things that CEOs must be doing in tumultuous times?

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