

Mind Your Business

Allen Azoulay: "You Have to Be Focused"

By Yitzchok Saftlas



This column features business insights from a recent "Mind Your Business with Yitzchok Saftlas" radio show. The weekly "Mind Your Business" show – broadcasting since 2015 – features interviews with Fortune 500 executives, business leaders and marketing gurus. Prominent guests include: John Sculley, former CEO of Apple and Pepsi; Dick Schulze, founder and Chairman Emeritus of Best Buy; Beth Comstock, former Vice Chair of GE; among over 400+ senior-level executives and business celebrities.

Yitzchok Saftlas, President of Bottom Line Marketing Group, hosts the weekly "Mind Your Business" show, which airs at 10pm every Sunday night on 710 WOR and throughout America on the iHeartRadio Network.

On a recent 710 WOR "Mind Your Business" broadcast, Yitzchok Saftlas (YS) spoke with guest Allen Azoulay (AA), partner at Concrete Mortgage Capital Inc. in Toronto and Chief Investment Officer at Apex Equity Group in New Jersey.

YS: Here's an important question, especially for someone young like yourself. How can someone make sure to achieve their long-term objectives?

AA: I would say first, stay focused. We live in a completely distracted world today with all the social media and everything needing to be instant gratification. There are pros and cons to that, although I believe there are more cons. We're completely distracted, but in order to achieve long-term objectives we need to utilize time management and focus and passion. It's a combination of all those factors that's ultimately it. By continuously following

that same pattern and being consistent, you can achieve your long-term objectives.

Most people aren't consistent – it's hard to be consistent – but ultimately, it's focus, it's time management, and using all those elements together as one.

You spoke about the challenge when Covid hit and being in the world of real estate. You also run major non-profits. You've authored books. Perhaps you could talk about challenges and how they may seem like big obstacles, but if you have the right mindset, you could just plow right through any challenge.

I think you used the right word: mindset.

I think the biggest challenge that I've ever faced is people's negative approaches. If you have a positive mindset and keep on going, like I always say, a horse has two blinders. It allows them to be focused. Ultimately, that is what a person needs because you're always going to have those negative people bringing you

down. It's just the way we live. It's the world we live in. Especially in the world of Covid, there's more negativity. People are frustrated, and so on. You have to keep on going forward.

I've had people tell me, you know, you should write your books this way and not that way, after I came out with the publication. Before I came out with the publication, people told me, don't raise money because of the recession in 2008. But I still did. And every single time I did it, I prevailed.

Keep thinking positively, stay consistent, and then you should be OK.

Let's talk about another favorite topic of yours, time management, especially in today's day and age. In one respect, people have plenty of time. They have time to play with their phones, watch videos, all those things. And yet at the same time, what does everyone say? "I don't have time for anything." What's your take on that?

Absolutely. It's interesting you're saying this because my grandfather always told my father that you can never regain your time. Never. So, when you have that mindset and your father drills it into you – which my father did to me – you're going to appreciate and value time immeasurably.

There's also a famous saying, "Time waits for no one." Time is essential these days. People aren't using their time well. Their social media is absolutely the biggest distraction; it does not help. When I call people, some of my clients, they're listening to the radio, to the TV, to music. I want to have a conversation with you. I don't want to have a conversation with the news. I don't want to have a conversation with your music. I don't want to hear you typing in the background. I understand we're in a world of multitasking. I get it. But it's also wrong. It has to be focused. You have to be focused. And that's how you can complete your objectives.

What advice would you give to an executive on how he starts

his morning? What would you recommend that the first hour in the office look like for someone who's really going to be productive and get a day's full of work done?

The first hour, make sure you focus ultimately on your To-Do list. You should have a To-Do list prepared the night before and focus on that. That To-Do list should be your entire plan for the entire day. Obviously, it changes, constantly changes. I keep my list on my phone in the notes app and I constantly change it, but I'm obsessive about it because I'm obsessive about time. But I have Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday written down and I even print it out, and I place it in front of me.

Also, the unique thing that I do, which I'd like to share, is that any objective I had – whether it's coming up with a new book, raising a certain capital for a particular project, whatever it may be – I literally print it out old school style and I place it right next to my computer where I look at it every single day. It inspires me and motivates me to move forward. When you have it visually in front of you, it just gets done. You can't hide from it.

What tips could you share in structuring a nonprofit to operate efficiently and to get with the real world? Now, many, many of the nonprofits that are out there in the Jewish world are doing amazing work on the frontlines. But I'm talking about what you did here by Ezrat Achim in terms of management. What tips could you provide in terms of management?

Management is a very delicate topic. It sounds simple, but it's not. You have to know who your team is. You have to restructure it. You have to, unfortunately, fire or lay off people. You also have to be able to analyze everyone's ability to perform. If they just can't deliver, then you got to move on.

So that's what I did. I saw who was around me, and who was getting things done. Unfortunately for nonprofits, you always have those

one or two or three individuals out of the 20 that get their work done. Obviously, we're in a different world today of collecting funds – it's a lot more challenging in this world that we live in. But that shouldn't be a reason and an excuse not to go out there. There's enough money still to raise for non-profits or for anything for that matter.

Ultimately, it's the restructuring and analyzing of the personalities that you work with.

Allen, my next question is going to be near and dear to your heart as well. You wrote a number of books. How in the world did you have time to do it?

It's one of the hardest questions. It's discipline. It's motivation. It's being passionate. When you love

it's a passion and it's really discipline to put things into perspective.

Allen, we went through many different topics on tonight's show. I want to try to connect them all, especially through the lens of a young entrepreneur. Perhaps you could share some tips or strategies on how to keep focus and to make sure that you do accomplish the goals that you set out to achieve.

Sure. I think one of the main things, as I mentioned earlier, is the list, having that list, which is focused on that particular project that particular day. You got to get that done. You got to focus on that and not focus on a hundred other things. I have personally four computers, four monitors, in front of me.

"The passion will drive you to success."

something, nothing stops you, and you just go and ignore all the negativity.

As we mentioned earlier, it's time management. Every hour, every morning, every evening, I did not waste. It's as simple as that. I didn't spend as much time with my friends, I don't watch too many episodes on Netflix; I cut back on social media; I cut back from the distractions.

Also, it's really the individual. For example, I don't have any notifications on my phone, I have zero notifications, so if someone really wants to contact me, they're just going to call me like the old school way. If I'm going to get a WhatsApp or a notification on Instagram or whatever it may be, I have no time for that. I have no patience for that. When I'm at home or early in the morning or whatever, I'll go, and I'll check it. That's it. And that's the way I look at it.

So, it's all-time management and

And I'm working on one email here, looking at one site there. It's not productive. So that's one.

Also, be passionate, passionate about that list, passionate about your every day, passionate about your job. The passion will drive you to success. Take any passion and really apply it, you'll be successful.

Take away any negativity, keep your focus, time management, and cut off the distractions.

We're all wired that we're comfortable in our comfort zone, and we're afraid of going into the world of the unknown. What advice could you share with people on how they could say, You know what? Take a time out. Take a deep breath. It might be fraught with some challenges. Be ready for that. But it's OK to think outside of your comfort zone. What could you share with the listeners of "Mind Your Business" on that?

It's interesting you say that because there's a few components. One is change your physical setting often. There's a psychology behind that. When I was in Yeshiva University, one of the professors said every time you study, every few days, move your physical spot within the library. Very interesting. So, you can go to a coffee shop, you can go to this office, go to that office, work from home, whatever it may be. Ultimately, you want to get out of your comfort zone, so you could be more accomplished and get more of your day done.

I just want to interject on one topic, specifically of time, which has to do with everything we spoke about more or less. There's a famous quote from Albert Einstein: "The only reason for time is that everything doesn't happen at once." It's very interesting that he says that because we live in a world where it's completely the opposite of his words – everybody wants everything at once. And really, time is subject to just that moment. At that time, you could never regain it. So, time is of the essence for everything you do.

It really puts everything into perspective. If you want to get that task done, if you want to spend that extra minute with your child, whatever it is, time is the most essential and priceless component that we have and the best commodity. And this is something that we have to take care of, appreciate and nurture, for us, for our children, and for everyone around us, but ultimately for our entire day to be successful. ▲

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