Mind Y●ur Business

Allen Azoulay:
Visualize Your Goals

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; and 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), president of AzCorp Properties.

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YS: Can you discuss how you turn a weakness into a strength?

AA: When I was younger, my parents recognized that I had a weakness in reading comprehension. After going through what felt like 100 tutors, I said to myself, "OK, either I hit rock bottom, remain in the dark, and not go anywhere, or I go into it and just motivate myself." So, what I ended up doing was working on my weakness, where I would read a paragraph five times and not be able to comprehend it, until fast forward years later, I ended up becoming an author. So, I took my true weakness and made it my strength, from not reading, to eventually becoming an author, columnist, and so on. Of course, it was a process to get to that point. My parents were a big asset. My tutors were a big asset. But it was mainly my will to just move forward and get to that final result of understanding that one basic paragraph.

I think that everyone throughout the course of life goes through their ups and downs and recognizes their weaknesses and their strengths. But focusing on their strengths is easy. It's focusing on the weaknesses and making them strengths where a person can become successful. They have to identify the problem, whether they write it down or just verbalize it, and make it something that they focus on every single day. Those are going to be the successful people. Most people will recognize their weaknesses, but most, if not all, will not focus and work on that weakness, and that's the problem.

Why is it so important to commit these weaknesses in writing?

It's visualization. I'll have it written on my iPhone notes, copy and paste the same wording onto a Word document on my computer, and then I'll print that out and have a printed version in front of my face. So, now I've got a printed version, I have a computer version, and I have a phone version. And every single day, I'll constantly refresh that page. So, I'm constantly seeing those three things, all day long. For example, when I was coming here, I put my phone on airplane mode while I was doing some work in the car. You have to just zone in, no notifications, no social media, and so on. It's really about moving away from the distractions (because we live in a distracted world) and constantly having a visual reminder there of what you need to get done. You can't run away from it. It's not enough to just have it on your mind and maybe put it on a sticky note. Everywhere you go, you have to have that reminder, and then, if you have the will, you'll eventually get it done.

Every business exists to solve a problem in the marketplace. What would you say is the process for someone to find those solutions?

I've always believed that whether it's negative or positive, there's always a solution. There's always a way to move for-

ward. For example, when I'm in a negative situation and there really seems to be no solution, I always remind myself what one way or another, everything is going to work out, even if it goes sideways.

I would also stress the importance of having the proper mindset of just being positive and not being at that negative point where you're thinking, "It's over. The deal is going to go sour," or whatever else you may be concerned about. You always have to think positively. Having that positive mindset will always adjust your mind, your lifestyle, your work ethic, and everything else.

I want to share a quote from, believe it or not, Kobe Bryant. He said, "The key factor for me wasn't whether or not I was ready; it was the fact that if I wasn't ready, I was determined to figure out how to get ready." In other words, he had to figure out a solution to the problem. Even if there is no solution, he'll figure out a solution to get there.

We have to focus on the solution, not the problem. So, go outside, take a walk, have a coffee, have that breath of fresh air, change your mindset, and then come back to that problem that you're dealing with and figure it out. Speak to other people and bounce some ideas off each other. That's what I do personally. And then, you'll hopefully have that solution in place.

Why is it so important for a leader to have a mindset of changing the world?

I'll give a religious answer, and then I'll give a secular answer. Look at the personality of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, for example. I actually named my son after him and wrote a biography on his life. He could have just been like any other scholar, sitting in a study hall and not impacting the world. Yet, he implemented many changes, even within the IDF and the State of Israel. He endorsed the fact that 80,000 Ethiopians actually held the status of being Jews. And the list goes on. It's the same thing with the Lubavitcher Rebbe and his impact on the world.

In comparison, in the secular and contemporary world that we live in, there is Elon Musk. I read his biography by Ashlee Vance, and he wrote that Musk became a billionaire by changing the world, whether through Tesla having no gas, sustainable solar energy, etc. So, he has a brilliant mind. He's certainly a unique character in every aspect. But at the end of the day, he made billions through changing the world, whereas most peo-

ple became billionaires or millionaires just through regular entrepreneurial ways. So, to me, if more people took that method of wanting to change the world in whatever fashion, we would definitely be living in a better world.

What's the strategy for running a company that has properties with employees, freelancers, or consultants in different places?

It's really about creating systems, efficiencies, and like-minded people. That's the real truth. So, you really have to start from the top. I know many people that have way more properties than me in many different states, but their management skills are horrible. They don't acquire well, they don't underwrite well, whatever it may be. So, it's really having the same like-minded people and systems efficiencies, such as having Google Drive, where everybody can work live through Google Docs, Dropbox, DocuSign, and you could run everything remotely. But you have to create your team as well, which is very hard. All my properties are third party property management, and eventually, the idea is to become our own property management. We have Ohio, Connecticut, and now we're moving to Michigan. And the idea is not to get the other 47 states. The goal right now is to build a portfolio in each of these states and particular cities, and to analyze every town wherever we are. And then we create relationships with realtors, with property management companies, with contractors, and we create WhatsApp groups per state with a realtor that's affiliated to each one. That's where you ultimately want to build that team.

It's hard. I'm in the midst of hiring 1-2 people right now, and it's very difficult to find that like-minded person. I'd rather take my time interviewing 30-40 people until I find the right one, instead of finding the wrong one and having to be constantly re-hiring.

Can you share your tips on delegating

efficiently in order to make sure that the people you're hiring are going to deliver to your standards?

I believe in making tasks, giving timelines, making them accountable, and constantly refocusing on those tasks with weekly or bi-weekly meetings. Also, take the focus off of yourself as the main person. Start putting that accountability and responsibility onto others immediately. And if you notice their leadership skills aren't enough to complete those tasks, then they might not be qualified to delegate themselves or to take the job. It's really just changing your mindset by giv-

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ing things over, and not just by forwarding it via WhatsApp or email. It's more than that. It's giving them the leadership skills, the accountability, the tasks, the timelines, the deadlines, and so on.

Always set goals for the team. For example, by early 2023, all the properties have to be 100% occupied. Right now, we're at like, 85%-90%. That's a goal. And every week, I'm making my team accountable. Every week. Not every day, which is too much. Not every month, which is too little. It's just constantly being on top of that, but not obsessive. You have to give your team their space. But there's a check and balance in place.

What are some tips for setting attainable goals?

ABe realistic. I have another book that I've co-authored coming out on the history of Moroccan Jewry. It's being worked on. I'm overlooking the project. But I can't say that it's coming out in 3-6 months. I know that it's going to take a year. Also, create constant timelines and again. Put a visual in front of your face, through email, phone, whatever it may be. Create realistic goals, and then constantly change those realistic goals. I always print what I'm working on, old-school style. Instead of being on the iPad, I'll print out the picture of the mock book or building I'm working on, because I truly believe in the Law Of Attraction. If you see it, it will come. Maybe not always, but in my office, I have all my current build-

ings that we purchased, as well as some future buildings and some future publications. So, I have around eight books in front of my desk that don't even exist. But at the end of the day, if it's there, that's a goal. It's in front of me, I can't get rid of it.

You also have to be realistic. I'm not going to come out with eight books in a year. So, it's over the span of 5-10 years, whatever it may be.

What are your strategies for building a strong team?

I take my time to hire and bring on the right people. It's more of a long-term goal. I have one particular person who works for me that says, "I don't ever want to work for anyone else. I'd rather get paid less and be happy than get paid more and be unhappy." So, that mindset is obviously something that hopefully I'm getting right.

It's very important to constantly encourage the right people at the right time. You have to constantly be there, pushing them and telling them "great job" for their recent emails, spreadsheets, or whatever it may be. It creates that natural positive environment. Just a simple "thank you" and recognition makes your team feel like they're in a safe space. And so, their response to that appreciation will be, "I'm going to really work well." I see the opposite in some companies, where the boss is completely bad at communicating, won't respond to emails or WhatsApp messages, and won't acknowledge other people. You don't always have to praise someone 24/7, but I did a particular job for someone, a large project, and I don't even think the person ever said, "Thank you." So, something so simple, just a few simple words, can go a long way.