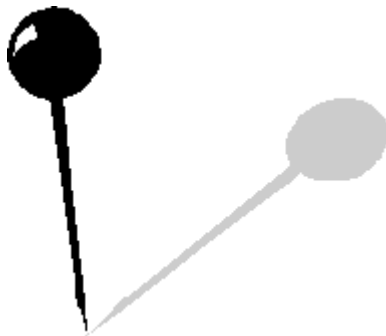




10 Ways to Realize Hidden Opportunities

By Jeff Beals



"Great moments are born from great opportunities," said the late Herb Brooks, one of the world's most famous hockey coaches.

Brooks certainly seized opportunity during his career. He agreed to coach the 1980 U.S. Olympic team that beat the "unbeatable" Soviet Union in Lake Placid, New York during the famous "Miracle on Ice" game on the way to winning the gold medal. It was a modern-day

"David vs. Goliath" matchup. Many coaches would refuse such an overwhelmingly difficult job. In fact, several did.

But Brooks saw opportunity in the monumental challenge of leading a bunch of young, amateur, college all-stars against the essentially professional players of the Soviet Union and other European hockey powers.

That opportunity paid off, to say the least.

Whether you're talking about sports, business or any other subject matter, seeking, finding and capitalizing on opportunity are among the most important things a professional must do.

There's one big problem with opportunity, however. It is often hard to find and even harder to harness.

"We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations," said Charles Swindoll, an American religious author.

I agree wholeheartedly with Swindoll's characterization. The best opportunities are often hidden. They are often located in places we least expect to find them and are presented by people we least expect to provide them.

That reminds me of the old story that sales managers like to share with their young trainees: "On his way back from a three-day fishing trip, a multi-millionaire visits the showroom of an upscale, luxury car dealer. The salespersons, seeing an unshaven, disheveled, poorly dressed man, essentially ignore him. Offended, the multi-millionaire buys a top-of-the-line model the next day from a direct competitor." There are a lot of ways to tell that classic missed-sales-opportunity story, but they all sound something like that.

If opportunity is so important to our success, and so difficult to find and recognize, we need to focus more of our energy on it. Unless you're naturally good at it, finding and capitalizing on opportunity needs to be a deliberate focus:

Open your eyes and ears - we can no longer afford to be indifferent, or even worse, oblivious to the world around us. Be on the lookout for ideas that could lead to new opportunities. Even more important than eyes and ears, keep your mind open too. Many of us miss opportunities, because they don't fit into our pre-existing paradigms.

Remember that all people count - sometimes we get so obsessed with the "right" people, we miss out on valuable opportunities from people, who on the surface, can do seemingly nothing for us.

Fight through the fear - one of the biggest reasons we miss out on extraordinary opportunities is because we are too afraid to leap. Herb Brooks wasn't too afraid to leap; we shouldn't be either.

Let your creative juices flow - the Nobel Prize-winning scientist Albert Szent-Gyorgi once said, "Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought." The more creative you are, the more opportunity you will discover. See the world in a different way, and doing things like nobody else, and just watch the opportunities that manifest.

Take risks - As the old saying goes, "nothing risked, nothing gained." Unless you take a chance and do something new, you'll keep running into the same old opportunities.

Work really hard - "Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work," said the great inventor Thomas Edison.

Set meaningful goals - make those goals specific too. The more you clarify what you really want, the quicker you will recognize it when it shows up.

Find quiet time - many people have found great opportunities, because they prayed for them or spent time meditating about them. Such activity creates focus in your mind, and a focused mind is a powerful mind.

Believe - visualize success and tell yourself that good things will come. A positive mind is more receptive to hidden opportunity.

Prepare - as the old Boy Scout motto says, "be prepared." You never know when the perfect opportunity will open up. If you're not prepared, you might not act on it quickly enough. In his autobiography, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani said he believes in "relentless preparation." He constantly prepares for crisis, so he will perform properly. Same thing applies to opportunity.

About the author:

Jeff Beals is an award-winning author, who helps professionals do more business and have a greater impact on the world through effective sales, marketing and personal branding techniques. You can learn more and follow his "Business Motivation Blog" at www.JeffBeals.com

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