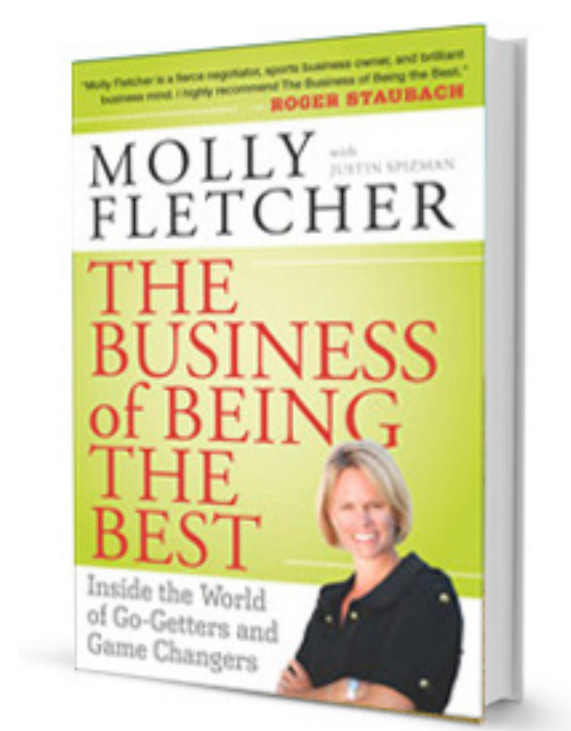


(Taken From) The Business of Being the Best: Inside the World of Go-Getters and Game Changers



It is not a coincidence that the word “question” begins with the word “quest”. Quest is defined as the act or an instance of seeking or pursuing something; a search. Day in and day out people begin a personal quest to succeed and be the best they can be in areas of their lives. Arthur Blank is clearly one of the best. As founder of Home Depot and owner of the NFL Football team, The Atlanta Falcons, he lives and breathes his life by a T-shirt slogan that reads, “There is no finish line”.

From the boardroom to the locker-room, the practice field to the field of life, and highlight reels to business deals, the best share a common set of traits and characteristics laced with passion and persistence that drives their success and fuels their inextinguishable flame. The best simply never stop and always strive for something far greater. They never rest on their laurels, they never rest on their accomplishments and they aim beyond the finish-line. They understand the rapid

waters of change and no matter how good they get, there is always room to improve and perfect the concept of best. Arthur Blank said, “I never focused on the competition, I always focused on my customer.” The finish-line represents an end in sight, but the best see far beyond it and into possibilities no one even considered. So, what does that tell us? The critical core of a strong foundation, work ethic, intellect, persistence, and attention to details promotes a standard of excellence. Those who succeed in becoming the best work for every inch of success and every millimeter of accomplishment. Just like an inch can be the difference in winning a game or losing it, it is the same in business. The inches add up to the difference between where you are and where you want to be.

It is not luck or coincidence when you see a MLB player hit a game-winning home run that sails over the outfield wall, a PGA golfer sinking the tournament winning put on the 18th hole, a coach leading his team to a world championship, or a CEO build a successful and profitable company out of his two-car garage. These feats are the result of diligent practice, dedication, and the hard work and determination it takes to get to the next level. The people that achieve these feats value hard work and are constantly fine tuning their skills. Their results come from consistently working hard at their trade. Period.

Defining Your Own Version of Extraordinary

It is important to understand that people who are the best in their field are relentless in their journey to become extraordinary. They have an unbelievable and undeniable desire to excel and succeed at what they do, whether it be selling, negotiating, hitting, kicking, throwing, or hosting. Why? Because they are competitive and they love to win. And they want to win over and over again. Through managing and working with the best, I have seen a lot. I have observed strong and experienced people fall from greatness and I have seen new comers rise to the pinnacle of record-breaking success. While everyone has their own unique and different path to achieving greatness, their stories, many of which I will share, are great learning’s and inspirational. We all have our own definition of greatness. We have all been told in our lifetime to try our hardest and do our best. But it is possible to outperform even our own expectations and redefine your personal greatness to something more than you ever imagined. It is only by changing the way you think about success that you can fully embark on the quest to become the quest.

So how do you go about redefining your idea of personal greatness? First you need to consider these questions: Why do you want to be the best? For you, what does it mean to be the best? How can you become the best? How can you circumnavigate a world of competitors and go-getters to be the one that everyone else is admiring and turning to for advice, guidance, and inspiration? Answering these questions will help you start your journey to becoming the best. The answers to some of these difficult questions will come from within. Only you can decide why you want to be the best or what your inspiration is to improve and grow both personally and professionally. But the stories surrounding the go-getters and game-changers in the forthcoming pages will help you answer the questions pertaining to how you make it happen. Each of them have worked hard to become the best, and their insight and experiences will help you reach unimaginable heights.

The crème de la crème know that before you can hone your skills and refine your abilities, you have to build a strong foundation. You have to be sturdy and well built to succeed. If not, the challenging winds of life will simply blow you away. And it all starts with a mentally robust foundation, so let’s focus on the foundation that the best share. Through my work with successful executives and athletes, I have learned that all people who achieve extraordinary success in their field carry a set of similar qualities that enable them to put the rest in place. And the good news is that it’s completely possible to learn from the best and apply their lessons in your own life and career. With a full understanding of these skills and characteristics, you will be able to identify and grow into successful businessman or woman, coach, entrepreneur, authority, Doctor, Lawyer and future leader of our generation and generations to come. So let’s take a look at what makes the best the best.

The Best Kick it Up a Notch

Being great means finding the top, and kicking it up one more level. If you want to achieve greatness you can’t see ceilings, obstacles or limitations as roadblocks. The best do not allow themselves to feel safe and comfortable, but rather, they use every day as an opportunity to become a trailblazer and redefine success and the cutting edge. The most successful people in this world, no matter what industry they are in, have a unique and different outlook on how they run their business, manage their employees, carve out niches, and manage their careers. For example, Tom Izzo, head basketball coach of the Michigan State Spartans missed a very important free throw during his youth. If he hit the shot, they would have won the game. So to this day, Tom still finds time in his schedule to shoot and make fifty free throws a day. This grit and intensity translates to success on the court and in his profession.

Another example of Tom’s dedication to being the best can be seen in his behavior after his team won the national championship. Once the horn sounded and the game was over, he was cutting down the net, doing a media conference, and celebrating with his team and fellow coaches until the late hours of the morning. However he didn’t bask in the victory for very long. The next morning at 7 a.m. he was strategizing about ways to persuade a recruit to come to Michigan State the next year. Tom had the opportunity to reset, relax, and celebrate his success. But Tom is part of the elite in his industry, winning an NCAA championship, six Ben Ten regular season titles, and two Big Ten tournament titles. And when you have reached levels of success like Tom has, you know that if you are not the one making those phone calls to recruit next year’s talent, you sure can bet your competitor is. Kicking it up a notch means you must have a sense of urgency. Tom clearly has that.

Tony Conway, founder and owner of A Legendary Event, an award-winning special events company, said, “To be successful in business you need to have a taste for the unexpected...and an unending desire to make people happy.” Tony has flourished and prospered as one of the leading businessmen in the catering industry because he has vision that few others have. His driving desire to be a groundbreaker in his industry is demonstrated in his attitude toward each and every one of his events, and he has over 2,500 events per year. Tony said that while he has 50 talented employees in his company, he has over 25,000 salesmen and women around the country. He believes that each and every client and individual that attends one of his events plays a vital role in his success. If he impresses each of them with his attention to detail and unexpected surprises, he will have one more salesman pushing his product to the consumer industry. Therefore, he attends as many of his events as possible. Tony has taken the simple concept of entertaining others to an entirely new and unique level. He understands the importance of separating his company from others by focusing his time and energy on making sure that while the party may end, the memories will live forever. Tony meticulously studies each and every detail that goes into his events to ensure they are innovative and unmatched by anyone else in the industry.

Customer satisfaction in business is one thing, but understanding and anticipating what the costumer wants and needs, sometimes even before they do, is the next level. And the only way for Tony to do that is by being in the trenches himself. But he also teaches others to see things the way he sees them, to solve problems the way he might, and to attend to his clients with the same vigor and passion that he does minute by minute. Tony surely would not be able to instill this level of customer service into his staff by sitting in a corner office on the 30th floor of a high-rise building. That is what I mean by going the extra mile, kicking it up a notch, and blowing the competition out of the water. Tony Conway accomplishes that daily. The best kick their momentum into high gear after they reach each and every milestone, like Tom did by starting his recruiting process the morning after his team won the national championship. They don’t sit back, relax, and pat themselves on their backs when they accomplish something. Give them a little taste of success, and they want more and more and will work hard to get it. When everyone else takes a break, they move forward. There is always more to be done, ways to improve, and higher goals to reach. But let me be clear. The best do not take their accomplishments for granted. They work hard to reach high levels of success and take great pride in their achievements and find enormous pleasure in their triumphs. The best, maintain a fundamental understanding of the qualities that got them where they are and work hard to build on their already strong foundations. They understand the importance of improving upon and expanding their abilities.