

Source: Bread and Butter, by Tom McMakin Published by: St. Martin's Press, New York June 2001

Subject: Chapter 10 - Being the best at one thing.

I found this book generally very interesting. I want to focus in particular on Chapter 10 – “Being the best at one thing”

This chapter deals effectively with a general subject that I think of as “Process versus Passion”. As probably the number one process I guy, I am also a big supporter of passion so this whole subject is very interesting to me. I think we can use this piece as a jumping off point both in how we describe to others how we do what we do in making wine but also as a motivational piece for most if not all employees.

In reading the piece there were a number of points that I want to comment on that support the above. Items from the piece are in quotes and highlighted in yellow.

“My job is to be present to what I am doing and watch the bread closely”. When I think I am doing my job well [since no one evaluates me, I am the only judge currently], this statement really reflects how I think about it. Many people wonder why I delve into detail on certain subjects. Well, that is my way of watching the bread closely. There are some subjects I am always watching closely they are the elements that I believe help me to understand the basic health of the organization and our ability to accomplish our goals.

“..have an honest-to-God passion for what you are doing”. I am very passionate about my work and the thing I am most attracted to in co-workers and employees are people who are passionate about theirs. It may seem odd for a person whose main strength is analysis with a minor in creative problem solving to like “passion”. What I like is passion with a purpose. I give people numerous chances to fail if I believe that they are on board with company goals and pursuing their part with a passion even if I personally have major doubts about their methods. I give people like that a lot of room. Maybe more than I should.

“.. everything in this world .. can be broken down into checklists. ...but unless you are paying attention – really paying attention --- all the checklists in the world won't save you.” I couldn't have said it better. As Mr. Checklist, I know that they are just a tool and a dangerous one at that. If the environment changes or the requirement for success changes, slavishly following past formulas are the worst thing you can do. Getting employees to understand that when they need to question authority and not “walk of the end of the pier” is one of the hardest management challenges. “You follow the rules.. but you adjust what you are doing based on what you are seeing”. That pretty much sums up how I would like to communicate to almost all employees on how to do their job.

“..the balance between the need in business to make the highest quality product but at the same time to manage your time wisely.” Again this hit home because I am Mr. 20/80. 20% percent of the effort will gain 80% of the result. On the other hand as I



observe my own behavior I find that I break that rule often. Thinking about when I break it, it does relate to what I think of as those issues that I think of as critical, things that I believe have to be as close to 100% as I can make them. What are those things? In this business I watch inventory VERY closely, by SKU, by vintage by warehouse even sometimes. I find that if do that I get a lot of information about what is going and get an early warning on problems. I watch the flow of bulk wine VERY closely again for the same reason. If I do that I find that I find that there are things that I need to talk to Wade and/or David Forsyth about that I wouldn't have done or would have done much later in the process. There are others but I am not going to try to list them all. I hope you get the idea. On the other hand, there are many issues that I say "good enough" even though I know they weren't done to perfection or even to very good. I usually just want to hope that the person doing is going to benefit from the less than perfect result. I some cases I go beyond that and actually check and see if they did. If the person is passionate about their job I guess I believe the odds are very good that they will self correct on their own. If they believe "[I] may be the best. But the only question ..is 'Can [I] make it better?'" then I think as an organization we will be fine.

But how do we balance "The price of perfection is prohibitive. ...The price of that last 10% necessary to bring 90% to 100% is almost never worth paying." The solution is as follows: "There has to be one thing in any successful business that you do best, which is never ever considered 'good enough'" For our company, I think that has to be the products [Wine and Vegetables]. Now having said that what does that mean? Does it apply to making Harvest White? Riesling? FF Chardonnay? VS Merlot? Marketing has said on some products "good enough". How do we reconcile that with the statement that "our wine must never be 'good enough'"? I am not sure I would like us to talk about that because I think that process will help us find a creative way of looking at our business that will help all of us have more passion for it and our jobs.

It is also true that I would like every employee to substitute the words "my job" for "business" in that sentence. I think if we could do that we don't need much else. Now again, do you all agree? If so, what should we do about that? If you don't what do you think. I hope to hear from you.

Wrapping this up I am going to take liberties with the last part of the chapter and substitute the word "wine" for Bread and translate his formula for success for one that I think might express well what we are trying to do. I am taking a risk here and may go too far but my purpose is to stimulate discussion and thinking. No quotes as I am paraphrasing

Quality wine is not a fad. Decent tasting domestic wine is new to America in the last ten or twenty years. The fad is diluted, flavor enhanced, non-varietal or "fake" varietal wine [central valley chardonnay cropped at 10 tons to the acre with 25% something else blended in, produced in mega factories.

The Recipe



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1. Hogue uses the best vineyards it can find for the products that it wants to make.
 2. Hogue carefully selects the varieties in the vineyard to go to the products where those grapes will best fit.
 3. Hogue's recipe is different from other regions or even other WA wineries. [Here I am really stretching my limits of knowledge or even competence].

Fundamentally, though we combine the right ingredients in the right way to deliver the best product possible at each type and price point. We are focused on that mission. "We are connected to what we do".

I especially think that this last sentence helps with the problem that we started out with. "Why technology or where's the passion?" Technology is what enables us to "stay connected" in ways that we couldn't otherwise do for an organization our size. This is equally true of the vineyard database, the various winemaking technical tools and processes and of the sales database

Well, those are my thoughts. I would be interested in what everyone else thinks. I am thinking of using these in my remarks at the various LRP sessions and marketing meets so I need input.