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Tenacity served city's founders and serves today's sellers

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When Arthur Denny staked his claim to fame and fortune on the shores of West Seattle over 150 years ago, the driving force fueling his dream was pure, unbridled tenacity. The modest settlement that would one day emerge as a modern metropolis often deemed one of America's most beautiful and progressive cities, however, did not come without suffering and loss.

His humble enclave on Alki's shores has since morphed into a landscape of towering glass and steel, yet his legacy of hard work, optimism and creativity remains. Whether Seattle can be legitimately labeled a world-class city is debatable. But one thing is certain. Executives from the Emerald City remain titans of industry, undaunted by fear, failure or loss.

Ask any executive from Wilshire Boulevard to Wall Street where some of the greatest innovations in technology, aerospace, retail and — OK, coffee — were birthed. Curiously, Seattle's rich heritage can be traced back to the day Denny's schooner Exact offloaded its most precious cargo: tenacity mixed with conquest. Yet despite the media's sardonic news — then and now — capitalism thrives in the Northwest. It's our legacy, and it can never be taken from us.

In today's economy, the most valued currency is neither gold nor oil futures. It's tenacity. For any business, from **Microsoft** to Molbak's, every Seattle business must continually re-invent itself, get scrappy, go guerrilla or whatever, and make its unique selling proposition more relevant and valuable to its customers.

Some scientists think tenacity is an inherited character trait. They also think sales acumen is in a person's DNA rather than a learned skill. Whether or not this is true, for those of us who are not wired as persistent salespeople there's ample opportunity to become such. By cultivating the right mindset, anyone can apply persistence to difficult tasks leading to a successful outcome, whatever the goal.

Because of my busy schedule I don't have long stretches of uninterrupted time to cultivate my mental game to keep that persistent edge. But here are some tips I've learned that take just a few minutes a day to fan the flames of tenacity to help meet your long-term professional goals.

– Read: Nothing keeps you in the game — whatever it is — more than reading books, magazines and blogs relevant to your business. Some of my favorite books are biographies. When I started writing copy years ago for a direct marketing agency, I read everything I could from Bob Stone, one of direct marketing's true pioneers. Later I focused on Ted Turner while exploring the interactive cable business. Now I'm studying the Beatles and music-industry execs Clive Davis and David Geffen — stories about the music and entertainment world where my business is taking me.

– Dream: Volumes have been written about the power of dreaming and visualizing success at the end of the road. In his “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” book, Stephen Covey calls it “beginning with the end in mind.” The clearer the mental picture of success, the more determination and tenacity it will foster. While in a taxi, waiting in line or lying in bed at night, paint a mental picture of your ultimate end game. Imagine the fruit of your labor and the benefits it will bestow on you and those involved in your success. If you have spiritual leanings, pray in earnest for that outcome and for the resolve to do your part to make it happen.

– Review your plan: Don't have one? Then make one up. For big client projects I may write a five-page plan. That's not what I mean. For long-range goals, like, in Denny's case, the mission to settle his clan in a new land of promise, or in my own case, moving my business into new sales and marketing frontiers, I jot down a five-to-seven bullet-point plan on a note page in Outlook that syncs to my BlackBerry. While traveling or during my morning routine, I'll read it to remind myself what to do today to keep moving toward my long-term goals.

– Take stock in your accomplishments: When you hit walls or experience disappointments, force your mind off the negative. Remind yourself of past successes, especially your proudest moments. I keep a short list of my biggest career successes (for me it's big account wins, breakthrough marketing campaigns or major awards). When temporary failures come — along with occasional self-doubt — I need to look back at road markers to remember afresh that I was good back then. I still am. The list is proof.

– Process with peers: There are a dozen or so people in my life with whom I'm constantly vetting new business ideas. They keep me on my toes and, even when my ideas stink, are consistent sources of encouragement. Choose these people wisely, however, since not everyone sees the glass half full. You want close associations with your cheering squad to energize you, not leave you spent.

In our lifetime there's never been a time when daily doses of positive reinforcement were more necessary. With rising unemployment, budget cuts and canceled programs running rampant throughout the Northwest and beyond, we must all dig deep to maintain that tenacity every day to keep our businesses, families and futures on track.

In the dark days over a century ago, fear didn't hold back Seattle's patriarch Arthur Denny nor the tenacious entrepreneurs who followed in his footsteps. Neither can it stop Seattle's business community from remaining at the forefront of progress and innovation today. Though the media may have created a surge of foreboding in our nation's collective psyche, Seattle businesses can ride that wave of fear with tenacity to return us to more peaceful and prosperous shores.

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