Stay Focused

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Several years ago an airliner lowered the landing gear for their descent into Miami. However, the light failed to come on confirming that the landing gear had deployed and locked in place. The procedure for changing the light was simple. The pilot engaged autopilot, but as the entire crew focused on changing one light bulb; a crew member accidentally dislodged the autopilot, and the plane began to descend. The crew was so focused on changing the bulb they all lost focus as the plane slammed into the Everglades killing over 100 passengers.

Focus is important. In business we need to be careful that we don't allow something simple to overwhelm our focus so that we miss the big picture. As King Solomon wrote, "It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other." (Ecclesiastes 7:18, NIV).

One time I shared an office with Dick and a pesky fly was buzzing around. Dick grabbed a newspaper and chased the flying insect. When the fly rested on the wall, he stepped on a chair to swat it but the fly moved further away. As he extended himself further, the chair flipped, and he fell and broke his arm.

When we lose focus, even though we're not likely to break an arm or crash a plane; we still pay a price.

We need to learn to recognize when we become distracted. I do quite a bit of research for several writing and other projects. I need to be careful that I don't wander into topics that may be interesting but not productive to the task at hand. Occasionally I wonder how I got so far off base. When that happens, I try to refocus to get back to my work topic.

Develop the habit of keeping focus even when circumstances change. Validate whether your diversion is well-placed or if you are losing focus like the pilots and losing sight of a more substantial problem. As you stay focused, your productivity will improve.