Do You See the “Invisible Gorilla” in Your Business?

There’s an “invisible gorilla” in your business. Yes, you read that right: You have an “invisible gorilla” in the midst of your business. Unless you’re at the zoo, this may be a confusing statement. Do we have your attention?

In fact, as an entrepreneur, your business depends on attention. And it’s your mission as an entrepreneur to make sure your attention is focused on the right strategies to grow your business and achieve better results.

But what about the gorilla? In their 2010 book, *The Invisible Gorilla: And Other Ways Our Intuitions Deceive Us*, professors Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons explore, among other things, how our minds work and how we miss seeing things that are right in front of us.

Their groundbreaking experiment, known as “The Monkey Business Illusion,” reveals much about our focus, our attention, our perceptions—just a few of the key elements that can either boost a business to success or send it spiraling downwards.

The video experiment involves two teams of people: one team of three people wearing white shirts and another team of three people wearing black shirts. Each team has one basketball. As all six people interweave amongst each other, they pass the basketball back and forth to their teammates. Volunteers were asked to watch the video and only count the passes made by the team wearing white shirts. Halfway through the video, a woman in a gorilla suit walks onscreen, stops in the middle of the group, faces the camera, pounds her chest, and then walks off-screen.

Following the video, the volunteers were asked how many passes were made by the team in the white shirts. Their answers varied, but the actual number was insignificant. The real purpose of the experiment was to determine how the mind functions when its attention is devoted to a single act. In this case, it was seeing, or not seeing, the gorilla. Remarkably, about half of the volunteers did not see the gorilla!

What does this have to do with your business, you ask? Everything! As Daniel Simons points out in “The Monkey Business Illusion” video, “When you’re looking for a gorilla, you often miss other unexpected events.” So it is with business. When we are so intensely focused on a particular aspect of the business, such as juggling cash flow or solving production problems, we can miss the most important things that are right in front of us.

When they speak of “inattentional blindness,” Chabris and Simons might as well be speaking about what you experience as an entrepreneur. “Inattentional blindness” refers
to devoting one’s attention to a particular activity (be it counting basketball passes or putting out fires) and unintentionally missing other critical information (such as a gorilla or innovative ways to increase cash flow, generate more leads, and leverage marketing efforts specific to your business and target audience).

Whether your attention is focused on a single aspect of your business or diverted to a multitude of activities, objectivity enables you to identify the opportunities and obstacles you are missing. You can actually train your mind to think differently about yourself and your business so you can see the “gorilla” for yourself—to recognize the many opportunities and strategies to grow your business.

But don’t take our word for it. Watch “The Monkey Business Illusion” video for yourself. What did you miss? Did you see the gorilla? What about the curtain changing colors or a player leaving the game?

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