

# **Focusing on the Big Picture: 5 Ways to Gain Perspective**

**By Karel Murray, CSP, DREI**

Have you ever concentrated on something so hard that the world seems to recede into the background? Like when you see a blemish on your chin and it begins to take on the dimensions of a quarter? Or when you are shuffling through a business proposal that you must deliver that day to an unsupportive group of peers? Each, in their own right seem to gobble up every inch of computing brain space as you mull over advantages, consequences, causes, and reactions of others. Our level of anxiety over the mind numbing details might eventually increase to such an extent that our friends and family become concerned.

When I allow myself to drift into single minded focus, my husband will look at me with an incredulous expression on his face and announce “You are just not seeing the big picture!” For example, he will begin telling me a story of what happened to a co-worker. As he speaks, my brain locks onto a phrase or portion of the story, working diligently to try and figure out exactly what he means or intends to convey. Rick, however, has already advanced the story line significantly enough that by the time I’m able to re-align my attention, I’ve missed the whole point of the story.

You see, I was taught that the devil is in the details and consequently the big picture will take care of itself if I address every single little nuance – such as correcting a spelling error in a love letter sent to me by my fiancé’. I think that was the first clue to my husband Rick that our marriage would take on interesting elements.

Essentially, some of us become so focused that we miss what is happening around us. A classic caution in driving is to avoid highway hypnosis where the driver’s eyes are so locked onto the road ahead that they don’t see what is developing around them; a ripe condition for accidents to happen. I think we do the same thing in considering the changes we want to make in our personal life, careers or businesses.

When we do strategic planning, all of the elements related to our business need to be evaluated through a non judgmental process. Awareness of our surroundings can actually help us prioritize and focus on “what is” and “what needs to be” in our business decisions.

To achieve productive focus, consider the following before making any short or long term decisions:

1. What does your economic environment look like? Has there been a downturn or growth in your area of expertise? What have other businesses like yours experienced and does that mirror what is happening to you? Once you have an accurate depiction of how your business arena is developing, you can begin to address areas to update, change or enhance.
2. How is your business impacted by turnover? Is your time taken up in orienting new hires or actively working to maintain key employees in terms of running your business? Is your staff working at optimum levels and enjoying the work they do? If you are a single entrepreneur, are your physical and mental resources charged up and in good working condition? Often our personal energy overrides the physical or mental exhaustion we may feel and you may not even be aware your engine is slowing down. Take a personal inventory and do what you must in order to retain your vitality.
3. Take a solid look at your current financial situation. What amount of funds or business do you need to survive through an economic downturn and how much do you need in order to thrive? What resources do you have available to you to shore up your financial portfolio? Once these questions are answered, it will give you the foundation on which to establish your business decisions.
4. Realistically evaluate what you offer in terms of product or services and determine if the marketplace still wants it. Even though you feel the public needs what you have, a fickle public will purchase what it wants and may leave you behind. Consider taking active steps to interview other entrepreneurs, professionals, current and past clients for real time information. Decisions made in a vacuum are never a good thing.
5. Evaluate what steps you need to take to catch up to the technology changes occurring in social networking, online meetings, and equipment/communication tools. Even though technology continues to evolve daily, you can utilize resources that meet your needs currently and through the next couple of years. Understand how your customers and clients relate to you and act accordingly.

Perspective is a wonderful thing. We may not like what we see (like an expanding waist line in the mirror), but once we understand what is really happening, only then can we take the necessary steps to fix it or build upon the successes that are already in place.

Focus on the big picture while enjoying the nuances of the individual elements that make up the image and environment. When we do that, perhaps we will actually get the point of the story.

I think I hear my husband cheering. Sweet.

*Karel Murray, author, humorist and business trainer speaks nationally and internationally. She is the author of "Straight Talk – Getting Off the Curb", co-author of "Extreme Excellence" and publishes a monthly online newsletter, "Think Forward® which has thousands of subscribers, The Profitability Blueprint Series: Career Building Concepts for the Real Estate Licensee and numerous articles in local, regional, and national publications. You can listen to exciting interviews at <http://www.JustForAMomentPodcast.com>. You can contact her at [karel@karel.com](mailto:karel@karel.com) or call 866-817-2986 or access her web site at <http://www.karel.com>*