

RUN THE ROCK

How to run the race of business well

I woke up one Friday morning like I do on most days — around 5 a.m. to get to the office around 6 — but this day was a little different. This was the day I “run the rock,” a 5K race.

I was invited to run by someone very near and dear to me, and this invitation was definitely more meaningful than most, because it came from my son.

Together, side by side, we would take on this beast. A 5K might not seem like much, but my son is not even 10 years old. I, on the other hand, am old and only run on a treadmill indoors. But he has been working hard in his running class this year, and at the end of the year, the participants run the rock and invite someone to run it with them.

The morning of the race, we decided we would set our goal at 35 minutes.

So there we were, with our matching T-shirts and numbers 1806 and 1807. We had sweat building on our brows and, most important, smiles on our faces. Then the starting gun went off and we were on our way. The school was cheering and we were starting our journey as a team.

There were five things I learned along the way.

1. Pace yourself. It was hot. He had never run that far, and we needed to set a good pace in order to complete our goal. In business, the reality is the same. Everyone wants to have a great January and get off to a quick start, but you may need to pace your marketing budget so it's not all used in the early part of the year, or pace your hiring of new staff members who you think you might need during the year.

2. There are lots of twists and turns. This 5K took us on some neat paths through the woods that had lots of different challenges. Business is not really that different from the paths throughout the race. The key is to pay attention and react accordingly to the different routes. If he and I didn't pay attention to all the twists and turns, we could have fallen, hurt ourselves and not accomplished our goals. The exact same thing can happen in business.

3. We did it together. We ran a few feet from each other the entire race. We pushed each other. We communicated, had a lot of fun, and by running together, we created a better chance of reaching our goal. Business is no different. No matter how good you are, you can't do it alone. You need a team and the ability

to work with team members and communicate throughout the year. If you accomplish those things, you will have a better chance to reach and exceed your goals. If you don't, it will be much more difficult, and you run a higher risk of putting your goals in jeopardy.

4. Stop and take a breather. I had mentioned to my son, “You are in control — whenever you need to stop, we stop.” Over the course of the run, we stopped five times and walked. Isn't the same exact thing true about business? Take time, stop, relax, and evaluate how you are doing and what changes need to be made. And then move on.

5. Save something for the end. My son had said a few times, “Dad, I want to finish strong since the entire school will see me cross the finish line.” Is business really that different? Remember to save something for the last quarter. In business, you want and need to finish strong. It is always critical for morale to get to the finish line strong.

We reached our goal and completed the race in 32 minutes and 4 seconds. I say go run the rock with your team — it's a wonderful bonding and business experience. <<



MERRILL DUBROW is president and CEO M/A/R/C Research, one of the top 25 market research companies and located in Dallas. He is a sought after speaker and has been writing a blog for more than four years. He can be reached at merrill.dubrow@marcresearch.com or at (972) 983-0416.