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THE EXTREME ENTREPRENEUR

PRITAM DOSHI — EO BOMBAY

GREG REX
EO SAN DIEGO

As a surfing entrepreneur, my passions include traveling the world, chasing storms and searching for the biggest waves possible. Not only do I get to experience the beauty of the ocean, but I'm constantly challenging myself while living on the edge. Believe it or not, the ocean can teach you a lot about life and business.

Once You Commit, Fully Commit

On one occasion in Hawaii, USA, I was surfing with some friends when I noticed a huge group of waves building on the outside reef. As I turned to catch a wave, I felt the forces of nature against me—wind, water, currents, all ready to crush me. Just then, I heard a “woohoo!” from a friend, giving me the confidence I needed to fully commit to the wave. I pulled into a glassy barrel, raced down a picturesque green wall and shot out the back flying 15 feet in the air. Seconds later, I paddled out for another one.

One of my first attempts as an entrepreneur was an equity partnership to help expand a Canadian company into US markets. The company was only doing US\$650,000 in annual sales, but I saw big potential, untapped markets and a chance to build my own company. It was a great opportunity, but it meant leaving the ocean, my family and a great position with my mentor. Nonetheless, I committed myself to the challenge. Within two years, sales had grown to more than US\$6.5 million. This experience taught me that sometimes you just have to commit to an idea, even if it seems scary.

Learn to Hold Your Breath

When you paddle out into monstrous waves, it's not a matter of if you're going to take a few on the head, but how many. The ocean, like the business world, is so volatile that you never know what you're going to get until you're out there. For 20 years I've been practicing holding my breath under water so that when I do get held down, I can relax and wait it out. This philosophy is also applicable to business, especially considering the current economy.

A few years ago, I helped start a dot-com that grew from zero to US\$40 million in 18 months. At one point, we had one of the top NASDAQ IPOs ever. Unfortunately, I had all my eggs in one basket when the stock market crashed. I wasn't ready, and it took a long time to recover. Now, I'm smarter and have learned that a wipeout doesn't have to be catastrophic. I mitigate risks to levels I'm comfortable with, take control of what I can, minimize losses, learn from mistakes and focus on a rapid recovery. In other words I catch my breath, paddle back out and wait for another wave.

Keep Looking “Outside”

When you're surfing, you have to pay attention not only to the waves in the lineup, but also to the rogue waves coming in on the horizon, what surfers call the “outside.” Big waves, like changing market conditions, move so fast that if you wait until they're on top of you, you'll get hammered. Having vision enables you to position yourself in front of trends and avoid getting caught on the inside.

When I started WeightLossDoctor.net seven years ago, my vision was to help transform the healthcare system. I saw a wave building, and it was called “wellness.” Consumers were looking for alternatives to surgery and drugs, especially for weight- and lifestyle-

related diseases. I decided to specialize as an expert providing business training to an underserved market. Many said the idea would never work. Instead of listening to them, I looked outside and kept working on my message, sales channels and relationships. We still have a long way to go, but now we have more than 1,500 health professionals improving the lives of 30,000 clients every day. Riding that wave of opportunity has put us on track for US\$13 million in gross sales this year alone.

The knowledge, mindset and skills it takes to survive big-wave surfing are similar to that of running a business. You anticipate ups and downs, remain calm under pressure, don't fight the currents and keep an eye out for opportunities. It's just like catching that perfect wave—you get in position, paddle like crazy, make the drop and then enjoy the ride. ☺



Riding the Business Wave

Greg Rex (pictured) is the founder and CEO of WeightLossDoctor.net, a training and coaching company that specializes in helping health professionals offer a turnkey weight management program to their patients suffering from obesity, diabetes, metabolic syndrome and other weight-related diseases. You can reach Greg via e-mail at greg@weightlossdoctor.net.