

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.

Today, I want to talk about a movie, but probably more importantly, within that movie, just some great lessons for personal development, career development, achieving your goals, all of those things. There's been a lot of, I guess, processes written about goal achievement. But this story, a true story, really had a gem and one I hope you'll sort of jot down and maybe be able to use to advance your career, advance your business, et cetera.

So, the movie, which is based on a book, the movie's called *A Million Miles Away*. And it's the story of a Mexican immigrant migrant worker who, eventually, their family moved to California. And the young lad is Jose Hernandez, who picked vegetables in the field with his family while growing up, I guess kind of decided that wasn't the future he wanted, and the father, his father, came up with some guidance and ingredients for him to have a different future.

So, the five ingredients, which he called his recipe, had five ingredients. The number one ingredient is find your goal. So, Jose was about nine years old, and he was watching the moon landing. I forget exactly when in the seventies, but he was watching the moon landing on the black and white TV with them straightening the rabbit ears to get the picture clear and all of that. And after he saw that, he knew what he wanted to be, he wanted to be an astronaut. He wanted to go out into space and get into the stars. And it was then that his father sat him down and gave him the five ingredients to the recipe for success. So, Jose had done number one, he had found his goal.

Number two, know how far you are. And this is the one I think that a lot of us, I know certainly I have, get this one wrong. And what number two is about, okay, I'm here and I want to get to here, and what is that distance? What's got to be accomplished for me to get from here to there? And I think in most cases we underestimate what we need to do to get somewhere, possibly because we overestimate where we are and who we are. We think, well, I'm this smart, and I've done all this and all of that. But to know how far you are from your goal really is a huge help.

I mean, I've talked about my tennis pursuits over this last year or so, and what I found was when I got to the top where the other top players were is they were better than I thought they were. So, I got there, but I didn't really get there. I didn't get all the way because it was really higher than I thought, and I thought I had more capabilities than I probably did. So, I got there and there's still a slight gap, but I mean, I'm going to get it. But anyway, know how far you are, and this one's very important.

Number three in the recipe, draw a roadmap. And that's really pretty simple, all of us know if you want to achieve a goal, you really need to map out the steps to get there. You don't achieve your goals in one great big leap. It takes a whole bunch of steps. It takes supporters with you to help you get there, and all of that. So, Jose drew out a roadmap and started going down that road and had a pretty good roadmap.

Number four, if you don't know how, learn. This one's so important, and again, I think we don't know what we don't know. So sometimes we don't know how much there is to learn. In this story, *A Million Miles Away*, Jose gets his engineering degree, gets his master's degree. He's now applied, I think he had applied to NASA for a position. He's been working 15 years with this lab, working on very high-tech things. And he's got six applications into NASA all of which have been rejected. And his wife asked him, says, well, what did those people who got accepted, the few people who got accepted, what were their characteristics? What did they have that you didn't have?

Well, that opened a huge box. He said, "Well, most of them were pilots." We had some high-performance athletes, we had divers, swimmers. People have set records. And one of Jose's characteristics was he wasn't an athlete. He was not in the best of shape or anything like that. So, what did he do? He learned, he took diving classes, learned how to swim dive, got his diving certification. Took his flying classes, got his pilot certification. Started getting in shape, ran a marathon. With his work he took a venture into Siberia, working with a Russian team on some pretty high-tech stuff. Learned another language, learned Russian while he was doing that.

And finally, after 11 applications rejected by NASA, he took his 12th application and handed it in directly in person to the person in charge of the program. And the guy said, "Well, what's different now? Why am I going to take you in when I haven't taken you in 11 times before?" And he starts to go through all of these things that he's learned, and he now knows. And apparently, he made an impression because on his 12th application, he got accepted into the NASA program.

Number five, when you think you've made it, you probably have to work harder. And boy, I've certainly gotten that one in my tennis. I got there and I thought, well, I thought I got there, but I didn't really get there because of number two, know how far you are. And then number five, when you do get there, you do still have to work hard.

So, Jose gets invited into this program, but now only a small portion of the folks that get into that program actually get to go into space. And he wasn't doing very well. Actually, Jose was failing. Where the flight director had to come to him and threaten that he was going to get tossed out of the program. And he spent some time with his trainer. A lady named Kalpana Chawla, I hope I pronounced that right, was his trainer. And by the way, she actually, during this story and later on in this actually died on the Columbia Space Shuttle upon reentry. But she told Jose that tenacity is a superpower, and that was his advantage. His tenacity was his superpower, and he needed to use that and take that to create his success.

So, in his continued training, one of the big turning points, he had trouble early on in his training in the underwater capsule. And you've probably seen that training in some movies where they got to get unbuckled and do various things underneath the water. Which probably simulates upon reentry the possibility of being underwater, but also being in space and being weightless as well. So, he had trouble himself functioning in this. But now, in one of these training sessions, he's learned how to get out of his belts and do what he has to do and get himself rescued and all of that.

But as he's left the underwater capsule, he noticed somebody behind him is having trouble. And instead of continuing to the top and do what he's supposed to do, and against the commands that he was being given, he goes back into the underwater capsule and helps the other person to get themselves released and takes them to the surface. And there are a couple of great lessons in there. Again, I think when you forget about yourself, finally, and you focus on team success is when you're truly ready, when you've truly made it as a leader. And if you're in a position where you're looking for the best and brightest, I think that's sort of like graduating. So, coming back to number five, when you think you've made it, you probably have to work harder.

I think that's, all leaders get to that point where you finally get less focused on yourself, and that's when you truly become a leader. And I think that happened with Jose. And he did go into space. So great movie, highly recommend you watch it, very inspiring.

Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.