

How Success Causes A Blind Spot And Creates A Rip Van Winkle Effect

Three Month Vacation Podcast

Sean: This is the Three Month Vacation. I'm Sean D'Souza. Once upon a time in New York's Catskill Mountains lived a man called Rip Van Winkle. You've probably heard of this story. I heard it when I was a kid. I've kind of forgotten what the story was all about. As the story goes, one autumn day he wants to escape from his wife's nagging so he wanders up the mountain with his dog. He hears his name being called out. He sees a man with antiquated Dutch clothing. This man is carrying a keg up the mountain; he wants help. They proceed to a hollow in which Rip discovers the source of the noises. There are a group of bearded men who are playing nine pins. Rip doesn't ask how they know his name but they offer him moonshine, which is a kind of whiskey, illicit whiskey, not legal. He decides to drink and then he falls into a deep sleep.

When he wakes up, it's pretty strange. His musket is rotting; it's rusty. His beard is a foot long. His dog is nowhere in sight. He returns to the village and he finds he recognizes no one. His wife has died. His close friends have fallen in a war; they moved away. This is often what happens in business, especially if you've got a successful business. You get a blind spot. You start focusing on what works for you, and then you work at it and you work at it, and it works even better for you. The longer you work at it, and the more successful you get, the more you have a blind spot to everything else.

Now, almost instantly you're wondering where is this going. Focus is supposed to be good, right? If focus brings success, then what's the problem with having the blind spot? There is a downside, and that's what this episode is all about. It's about understanding that you can have focus and you can have success, but that you can also have a blind spot.

In this episode we're going to explore three elements. First is the concept of the Rip Van Winkle effect. The second is the opposite, which is the danger of not having that focus. The third is the solution. How do we solve this problem of focus and not focusing at the same time? Let's start off with the first, which is understanding the concept of the Rip Va Winkle effect.



If you look around you, you will find that a lot of blogs have shut off their comments. Why have they done this? This is not just little blogs, but big blogs and mega-sized blogs. They've just shut off their comments. Why is this the case? The obvious reaction is maybe they've decided that they're big enough they don't need the comments, but that's not true. Everyone likes to hear back from their customers. Nothing boosts the ego more than having 50, 70, 100, 200 comments on a single post that you made. Remember, when people comment they also send it off to Facebook and Twitter and every other place.

Why turn off that channel? Why turn off the chance for people to experience your blog at a different level? The reason is very simple: that group has moved on. When you look at the most of the blogs today, even the really big ones, they have far fewer comments. It's embarrassing, so they have to turn it off.

Same thing with Facebook. At one point in time you could effectively run a business off Facebook. Slowly but surely, that tide is changing. Suddenly you find that Facebook has all these restrictions in place. Suddenly there are too many people looking at your stuff, but not the people that you want, so the tide keeps changing.

If you made a successful out of blogging or, say, Facebook or any other medium, then it's very simple for you to focus on that medium and not pay that much attention to everything else, so suddenly someone comes around and says, "Hey, podcasting is a big thing." You look at them with skepticism because you tried podcasting four or five years ago and now this stuff, whatever you're doing right now, is still working for you, so you get into that moonshine mode. You fall fast asleep, and that becomes your blind spot.

This is true even for us at [Psychotactics](http://Psychotactics.com). We had a blog going around 2003 before blogs became popular in 2005!; we dropped it. We had [podcasts](#) going around 2008-2009 before podcasting became popular; we dropped it. We never really stepped onto YouTube or Facebook or Twitter in a big way, or even a small way. The reason why we did that is because we had a blind spot. We had courses that were filling up super fast. I mean every single course fills up in less than an hour. We've had workshops in New Zealand, in the US, Canada, Netherlands, the UK, and they all fill up almost instantly.

Of course we send out a [newsletter weekly](#). We've done so since 2002 without



missing a single week. We're able to sell products for as little as 9.99 all the way up to \$400, \$500. When you look at that kind of model, you say, "Well, that's good, isn't it? It's great focus," and it is. But the ecosystem is connected. When we first started out in 2002, if we wrote an article and we published it on another site we'd get 200 subscribers. Yes, for a single article. Then we had the blogs come out and we'd get about 50 to 60 subscribers per article. Recently, with all those comments of the blogs turned off, we probably get 2 or 3. We're talking about really big blogs. You would think that the really big blogs would drive traffic towards you. It's not true anymore. They've had to relook their strategy; we've had to relook our strategy. Focus is a great thing, but things can change around you and you've got to be watching for what's happening around you.

This takes us to our second part of today, which is chasing everything that is around you. The opposite of focus is distraction. Most of us are not very good at focus. We are very good at being distracted. Every time someone comes up and says, "Hey, here's a new method," they just put the word new, improved, and we're off like a bullet. It's almost like the diet syndrome: the South Beach Diet, the paleo diet, the Atkins diet, the Zone diet, every single diet. We think that the next diet is going to solve our problem, but it never does.

It's the same thing for business. If you get into doing, say, podcasting, then you have to be prepared to enjoy it. You have to be prepared to love what you're doing so that you can do it for the next five years or ten years. When we do our courses, they're very tough. They're very tough for me. They're very demanding for me. When we do our workshops I'm on my feet for three days. I never sit down. I'm always running around teaching and doing stuff. Even these podcasts, I've already told you before, they take between three to four hours to produce even though they're just 15 minutes or 20 minutes long.

If you want to make a success of anything you're going to have to be willing to be there for the long run, but as we found out, the long run can change over time. It can twist and change, and suddenly blogs are no longer fashionable and Facebook is no longer fashionable. Maybe podcasting will not work out as effectively as it does today. It might still be good. It might not be as effective.

Which is where the third part of today's podcast comes into play, and that is the



concept of spinning plates. In the first section we saw the concept of focus on how that focus really helps but also creates a blind spot. Then we saw what happens when you don't have that blind spot and you're chasing everything in sight and not achieving a lot. Where's the happy medium? Where is the happy mix? It's a concept called spinning plates.

Spinning plates is just simply this: it's like someone you've seen at a fair. They put one plate on a stick and then they start to spin it. It goes faster and faster and faster and faster until it reaches a certain speed. Then the person leaves that plate and goes to the next stick, and then starts to spin that plate, and that reaches a certain speed. As the second plate is spinning, the first plate starts to lose some of its momentum and then you have to spin that and then go back to spinning the second one, and then you can put on the third plate.

This is how you're really running your business. If you don't want to have that blind spot, if you don't want to fall asleep by just focusing on a few things, then you've got to use the spinning plates method. We started out with a newsletter and we've done that week after week after week since, as I said, 2002. The second thing was we have courses on a regular basis, every year maybe. An article writing course is held once a year, headlines course is held once a year. During the year there are several courses, and that keeps the customers coming back. Once we settled all these courses and we have the agenda and the syllabus and the system in place, then we were able to add on workshops. Once the workshops were going we were able to add on podcasts.

People often wonder how do you manage to do all these things at once. Doesn't it get you really frazzled? The answer is no. To someone who's not used to spinning plates, it looks like an extremely difficult task, but to someone who's already adept at spinning different plates, it's just a routine thing, as routine as you playing parent and teacher and driver and chef and whatever you do in a day as you spin those plates. It's just a matter of getting that act together.

Once you're able to spin plates you can focus on your current activities and then add new activities as they come along. You don't stay like Rip did, stuck in one place forever and then the whole world changes around you. On the other hand, you don't start chasing every butterfly that crosses your path. The spinning plates is your answer.



we? You need to focus but you also need to be distracted. To be able to get the best of both worlds you have to get that focus really strong, get that rolling, and then add the plate. Once you start spinning plates, people will wonder how you're able to manage so much, but there is no secret to it. The people that struggle the most are those that are continuously either too focused or too distracted. You want to be where the spinning plates are.

What's the one thing that you can do today? The one thing that you can do today is to sit down and work out what are things that you are focusing on and what are the thing that are generating the most revenue for you and make you most satisfied. Then you look at what's changing around you. Then you add just one more plate. That's what I did last year. We were not podcasting. As I said, we were podcasting back in 2009 and then we stopped. Then I added the podcasting, and though it takes so much time, and we have courses and we have workshops and we're going to events and we're doing all that stuff, I still have time for my Three Month Vacation. I still have time to spend with my niece, who I mentor. I still have time to go to the movies. I still have time to cook. I still have time to be part of the membership site at [5000 BC](#), to do a painting every day. I also go for a walk for an hour and a half. I run a website at 5000 BC. Are you getting tired yet?

These are spinning plates. I'm not any different than you, but I've added the spinning plates over time, and that's what you should do, too. Make that list, and then add to that list one by one, and you will be absolutely amazed, gobsmacked at how much you will achieve in the years to come.

If you like the Three Month Vacation Podcast, then ask your friends to join in with you as well. Maybe make a walking group and all of you put on your headphones, go for a walk, and then you can discuss it later. I'm just kidding, but at least go for your walk and make sure that your friends know about the Three Month Vacation Podcast. It's full of stories, it's full of information, and it really helps your business.

If you haven't already left a review, then please do so, because I will be reading your reviews. Many of you have asked me if I'm going to consider doing a course on podcasting. Maybe email if you're interested, but we are going to be doing a course on headlines and how to create great headlines every single time, not by copying headlines but by understanding how they work.



That's later in the year. We're also having a [Brain Audit trainer](#). This is very expensive because it's going to be a year-long program. Brain Audit trainer, headline course, and headline trainer - that will be announced in June or July when we get back from Italy. I also will be working on the cartoon stock stuff that I talked about. I'll be drawing some really good cartoons, maybe about 200 of them. If you would like to use them in your books, in your covers, in your blogs, in your presentations, this is an amazing set of cartoons. You're just absolutely going to love it. They're lavish and it's nothing like what you would find on Stock Cartoon. That project is coming up as well.

As you can see, a lot of spinning plates, isn't it? That's how I like it. That's how I thrive. If you would like to get notification for all these events, then you have to get on the [Psychotactics newsletter](#), because that's the only way you'll know. That's at Psychotactics.com. You can find me on Twitter at Sean D'Souza. You can also find me on Facebook at Sean D'Souza. To get the transcript and resources for this podcast, go to www.psychotactics.com/40, and you will get everything there. That's me, the ex-Rip Van Winkle, signing off for now. Bye bye.

Useful Resources

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The Brain Audit: [Why Customers Buy \(And Why They Don't\)](#)

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Chaos Planning: [How 'Irregular' Folks Get Things Done](#)

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