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Perception Change

The Beatles weren't without controversy. From parents' fears of the Fab Four influencing rebellion in their children, to John's quote about being more popular than Jesus, to illegal drug use, J&R had their

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Occasionally at dinner, we play a game called "What's your earliest memory?" It's a great way to engage our kids and share stories about their early years. Their typical responses are 'the time we went to the State Fair' or 'boiling lobsters on the Fourth of July with the Bobbs.' My pat answer: 'Seeing the Beatles on Ed Sullivan.' It's interesting how vividly I recall sitting in our living room that night in February, 1964, watching them play "I Want to Hold Your Hand" as teenage girls screamed in the studio audience. I hadn't turned four yet; must have been the influence of three older brothers that forever seared that image in my mind.

The Beatles: Rock Band debuted last week, along with digitally remastered recordings of their entire catalog of songs about love and peace. Both enjoyed outstanding sales. The music of John, Paul, George and Ringo – which still sounds fresh – bridges generations. Ask my collegiate daughter to name her favorite band and she'll say the Fab Four. Businesses struggling to be relevant in this attention-deficit world should consider the Beatles. Longevity comes from being unique...and 'these youngsters from Liverpool' (as Ed Sullivan introduced them) were definitely unique.

Tick Tick Tock Back in the day, AM radio stations wanted songs to be three minutes or less to fit their program format, so the longest of the Beatles first 20 number one hits was "All You Need Is Love" at 3:47. "Yesterday" and "Help" were under 2:20, and the shortest, at a mere 1:57, was "From Me to You." The Fab Four formula was really no magical mystery...just three verses, three choruses and a lot of yeah, yeah, yeah.

Another profession where clock management is important is the National Football League, which kicked off its 90th season over the weekend. With 15:00 quarters and 40 seconds between plays, offenses have to operate at high efficiency to be successful. This is most evident in the two-minute drill, as players quickly return to the line of scrimmage without huddling to maximize the number of snaps and hopefully put points on the scoreboard.

Think about the speed in your business. Do team members operate as if the clock is winding down and they need to be in hurry-up mode? Or is it more a Bob the Plumber atmosphere, where time drifts away and continually you're wondering why things aren't getting done? Putting them – and yourself – on a faster time commitment might lead to better results. The Beatles and Tom Brady figured out mastering the clock is one of the keys to success.

Now, if the NFL would do something about all those commercials that turn games into a hard day's night. My guess is it will be a long and winding road before you get a ticket to ride on that revolution. Those owners tend to just let it be.

share of challenges to overcome and critics to face.

While the issues are different in your business, there are things going on that open you up to criticism. They exist in manufacturing, delivery, service or other customer-facing areas. An error many leaders make is ignoring them – or not recognizing situations in the first place. It's important to take time and think about how you're executing. Addressing those areas where you aren't living up to expectations is imperative to maintaining your long-term success.

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Words of Wisdom Each issue I turn to my collection of quotes for an inspiring tie-in to the message of *Fast:Forward*. This month I went searching elsewhere for a good one from any member of the Beatles. What I discovered after a half-hour is they just aren't all that quotable – at least in the motivational way. Then, I stumbled upon this:

"A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality." ~ John Lennon

That pretty much sums up everything – from putting together a rock and roll band that becomes legendary, to finding the love of your life and raising a family, to getting everyone on your football or business team to focus on running the same play. It's essential to make sure you include all participants in dreaming the dream together, instead of handing them a plan and saying, "Get to it."

Singing Your Praise Roy C. Williams (aka "The Wizard of Ads") writes a weekly e-Newsletter titled *Monday Morning Memo*. Last month, he discussed the need for everyone to have a vamp – someone who trumpets your uniqueness to the world. He mentioned several examples including: Colonel Tom Parker creating the image that became Elvis and strategically managing his career; Harold Hill in "The Music Man" inspiring River City to start a band and keep their kids away from the temptation of pool; and Don King promoting Muhammad Ali as the Greatest.

"Talented people live anonymous lives in every city, town and village," wrote the Wizard, "wishing they could only 'be discovered.' But 'discovery' isn't what's needed. What's missing is a vamp, an advance man, a promoter, someone who is willing to work behind the scenes, fully dedicated to your success."

Brian Epstein did that for the Beatles, convincing them to get rid of the rough leather look of their Cavern Club days and transition to tailored suits and mop haircuts...then he proceeded to shout from the rooftops, 'Get ready America, here they come.' Result: Beatlemania.

Here's the homework assignment to complete during your next thinking time: Who will be the "fearless, creative and willing" vamp for your business?

Until next month, continued success in all things.

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