

# THE FORCE OF FOCUS Series, Vignette #1

## Keep Climbing!

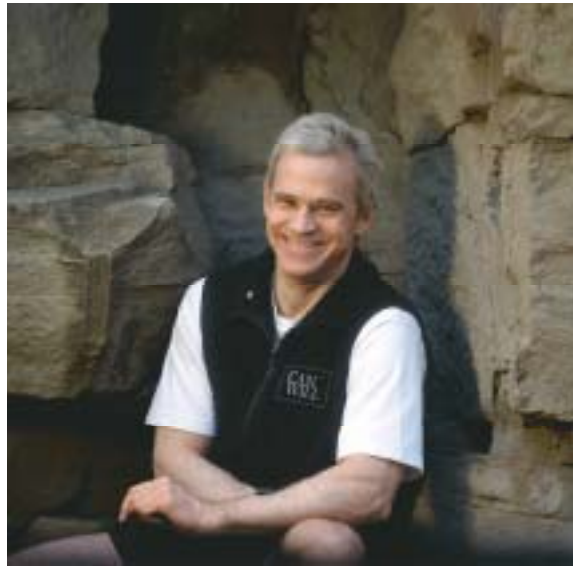
with Alan Hobson,  
Mt. Everest Climber, Summiteer & Cancer Survivor

*Editor's Note: Alan Hobson was a keynote speaker at AdvaMed's 2005 Annual Meeting in Dana Point, CA. This is the first in his 10-part series on The Force of Focus.*

### Focus on...The Next Step

It is a common belief that to achieve a goal we must focus on it. Actually, we only need to focus on the next step.

I remember the first time I saw Mt. Everest with my own eyes. Our expedition had been jack-hammering along a dusty dirt road in four-wheel drive trucks for days along the high Tibetan plateau, but I had yet to catch anything but a distant glimpse of the mountain. After what seemed like an



interminable period, we rounded a bend and suddenly there it was – the towering 12,000-foot north face of the world's tallest peak.

*The north face from base camp in Tibet, 12 miles from the mountain. No photograph captures the immensity of Everest. Credit: Michael Keller*

My mouth went dry. The hair stood up on the back of my neck. A pit formed in my stomach.

“I say we take some pictures and get the heck out of here,” my friend, Jamie Clarke, said as we gaped in awe. “Now we’ve finally done it. We’ve bitten off

more than we can chew and we're going to pay for it, maybe with our lives." It's a good thing the Chinese truck driver couldn't speak English because if he had, he might have turned the expedition around right there and led our team straight back to Kathmandu.

When we got to base camp at 17,500 feet a few hours later, I remember feeling absolutely overwhelmed by the magnitude of the challenge ahead. It was beyond daunting. It was terrifying. There was a very real urge to just sit down, stare blankly up at the thing and cower in its presence.

That's not what we did. Slowly we set about the laborious task of unloading the trucks and beginning to set up camp. Within hours the sun had set, the specter of the mountain disappeared into the darkness and we were left to our fitful slumbers. The next morning, before this menacing backdrop, we continued our ant-life efforts. The day after that, we did the same and the day after that, the same again. Weeks later we magically found ourselves within striking distance of the top.

Next time you feel overwhelmed by a challenge ahead, take your eyes off the goal and shift your gaze down to ground level. Decide what it is you need to do this instant. Focus on nothing else.

*Nepalese Sherpa Lhakpa Tsering watches his step at 19,000 feet. His life depends on focus. Credit: Bruce Kirkby*

**Big goals are not achieved in great strides, but in small steps.**

Take yours – one at a time. Eventually they can add up to big dreams.

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