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Ideas For Success | July

With David as your coach, you'll explore the business and personal dreams you desire. Much like sports coaches unleash potential in athletes, he will show you how to soar to new heights as a franchisor, franchisee, business owner or senior executive.



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Failure To Connect

Electricity in Texas is deregulated, and residents buy energy from

I almost didn't write this newsletter. Between family vacation, several new coaching engagements and a service project, I thought hard – really hard – about taking a break. (“It’s summer. Who’s gonna notice?”) Came up with all kinds of reasons justifying it in my mind. Even imagined how I’d explain it to you next month, positioning things in a positive way.

However, hitting deadlines is a big part of my personality style. Never pulled an all-nighter in college. Never went on the air unprepared in 15 years as a sports television producer. Never missed watching an episode of “The X Files”...way before the invention of DVRs. So, here it is – hot off the keyboard – on time for the 55th consecutive month.

'78 Is Great Ask my children which saying dad throws at them most often, and they would answer: “The older you get, the faster life goes.” Here’s proof. I’m typing this in the passenger seat as my wife drives us from Houston to Fort Worth. We’re heading to my 30th high school reunion. You gotta be kidding me! Thirty already? The memories of a great senior year – capped off by winning the state championship in basketball – are still vivid. Yet, the reality is every one of the 170 graduates who turned their tassels that day has experienced joy, sorrow and growth over the past three decades.

That’s the way it’s supposed to be. Each time you awaken brings another opportunity to learn, to experience things you never imagined. Between the many highs and low, are a lot of evens...and in those times the mind seems to pause and expand. During calm, you connect with a new awareness, preparing you for the next storm.

More than 100 attended our 10-year reunion. About 75 came to number 20. Only 50 registered for this one. People get on with their lives, and that’s the way it’s supposed to be, too. Still there’s learning to be shared this weekend.

A book I read earlier this year suggested: “Improve 1% each day.” Multiple that by 170 people over 30 years, and my classmates should be filled with knowledge.

Walt's Wisdom

This month’s magical idea from my encounters with Disney cast members is about ensuring your organization seeks continual improvement. It’s essential team members understand there are always opportunities to make a better impression on your audience:

“The one guest who notices is the one we’re in business for.”

approved providers. With our contract expiring last month, offers were arriving in the mail asking us to switch. One appeared attractive, so I called our existing provider to ask what they could do. "I'm sorry, we can't match it," was the reply. "It's easier to keep a customer than get a new one," I said, "so you sure you don't want to think about that?" She said no. I thanked her, hung up and called their competitor – 10 minutes later we had a new provider. Then I called back our current one and spoke to a supervisor. "I'm sorry we didn't value your business," she said. "We would be happy to match that rate." Of course, it was too late, so – always coaching – I suggested they might want to empower employees to make those offers upfront. Is there something like this in your business, and is it time to address it?

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Are you creating a culture that focuses on pleasing your customers one at a time?

Reason To Believe Right after you received last month's issue of *Fast:Forward*, Tim Russert died suddenly. The longtime host of "Meet The Press" was named one of the 100 most influential people in the world earlier this year by *Time* magazine. He had an outstanding reputation as a fine man and superb interviewer, always willing to ask the hard question in a respectful way. A lot of famous people weighed in with praise about his life, which ended way too soon.

On the following Sunday's edition of "Meet The Press," his chair sat empty for the first time in 17 years. Tom Brokaw hosted a tribute that included reflections from close friends James Carville and Mary Matalin, and reminiscing by former colleague Maria Shriver, the first lady of California. What struck me most was how little I knew about Tim Russert...and how much we shared: love of sports and devotion to our teams; careers in journalism; educated in Catholic schools (and still attend Mass); and, among the biggest fans of the same rock star.

It seems around 1973, Russert was promoting concerts at his alma mater while attending law school. He booked a little known performer for \$2,500 to play on campus. Guy turned out to be Bruce Springsteen, and they were friends for years.

The Boss is touring in Europe and was unable to attend the memorial service. However, he sent a video and sang Russert's favorite song, "Thunder Road." Introducing it, he said, "Tim had a real belief in that Promised Land and the American idea, and that was the passion that you heard behind all those tough questions on Sunday morning, and in that big smile."

During this month when we celebrated the 232nd anniversary of our nation's birth, it would be good to pause for a few moments to consider that belief and passion. The last line of "Thunder Road" is: "I'm pulling out of here to win." I'm confident the win will come. Keep the faith during these current lows. The time for learning is ahead.

Until next month, continued success in all things.

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