

“You are not a human doing but rather a human being” – Wayne Dyer

THE TENTH PRACTICE: Vitalize Your Workforce

R & R

Not long after I started our contract cleaning business, I had a backyard chat with my next door neighbor over the chain link fence between our yards. My neighbor was a broad, strong, healthy retired construction worker probably thirty years my senior. As a supervisor of many construction crews, he had some sound advice for me. One of his last jobs, according to him, was with a company that had been passed on to the son by his father. The father had made it a habit of being on the job every day to check each site, to make certain that everything was going according to plans and to ensure nobody in his crew was loafing. The son was not as conscientious, however. Before long, the business had begun to fail.

“Take my advice,” my neighbor warned. “Don’t trust anybody to watch out for your business. Check each of your jobs every day or the same thing will happen to you.” I took my neighbor seriously, but had a different approach to building a business. Here is what led to my method of growing our company.

Guilt Or Sacrifice

After spending fifteen years in federal government service as an air traffic controller, I became accustomed to enjoying lots of time off. I received five weeks of vacation each year, along with thirteen paid days of sick leave. Additionally, by taking advantage of The Flight Familiarization Program, which allowed me to fly on duty status in the cockpit jump seat, I could enjoy eight more days away from the control room.

To me, a big part of the joy of work was getting away from it and returning with fresh eyes. One cold, winter day, I flew early in the morning non-stop on Delta Airlines from Hartford, Connecticut to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. By eleven in the morning, I was sunning myself on the beach. I caught the early evening flight back to Bradley International Airport, arriving home before midnight. My fellow controllers thought I was foolish to travel all that way for just a day, but while I was sitting on the beach they were working in a dark radar room in the cold of Connecticut.

Suffering To Success

I had read stories of business owners who devoted their whole lives to baby-sitting their creation. In particular, one story I remember was about two hardware storeowners who had not taken a day off, except Sunday, in forty years. In their seventies they decided to sell out but wondered what they would do with themselves. Can you imagine? Forty years without a vacation! Do you think they experienced a full life before or after they retired? How could they, when their life was their hardware store?

All the stories and warnings about watching the business closely concerned me. After all, these were people with great business experience. Surely they knew more about managing their time and running their business than did a novice like me. Or did they?

Balancing Act

I love to travel and experience new people, places and adventures. I did not feel that I had to sacrifice all that when I became a business owner. Although other business people warned me that I could not trust the company in the hands of others, I felt I could maintain a balance. Business owners who do not take time off are just as out-of-balance as the ones who

are not taking care of business. They fail to learn the secret of getting away from the office to promote the health and soul of their company. They see themselves as the presence to oversee and *control* everything. With this approach, they neglect to take time to recharge their batteries.

Real Teams

Under this premise, a real team will never be created because others are not empowered to take the helm. Such business owners never take time to get out of their caves to see what the competition and the rest of the world is up to. Finally, they may never discover my axiom that states, “In the week prior to our vacation we will focus on our top priorities and accomplish more than we would in a month.” Thus we take a week off and gain two or three more, which puts us ahead of schedule. Then we return rested and refreshed. It never fails that the closer I get to my day of departure for a week in the Virgin Islands or an extended sail on my sloop *Miracles*, the more I get done. Getting away creates an automatic deadline for us. Before we leave, we concentrate on the most critical and important matters that must get accomplished or delegated.

Leave And Receive

Getting away for even a morning or day also enables you to build a responsible team. Even if you run a one-person operation, you can develop a system to leave clients in good hands or methods to maintain communication with them while you are gone. Then if you become ill or are called away for an unforeseen emergency, you will have a method in place to care for your customers’ needs.

Over and over again the maxim, “You get what you expect,” comes back to me as a cornerstone for building our vision. In the Old Testament it says, “As you think so shall you be.” (Proverbs 23:7) I was accustomed to time away from work so I was programmed to expect

it when I started our business. It was one of the most beneficial mindsets I brought with me, because it helped build a dynamic team. As a result, our company eventually evolved as a place of self-dependency and continual renewal.

My Uncle Alex stayed back in Saskatchewan, Canada near the tiny town of Arcola where he took over the family farm. The farm was over 1,200 acres. The frontage was prairie land where my uncle and his family raised grain. The back of the property was rolling hills that led up to the Moose Mountains where he raised hundreds of heads of cattle.

He leased out and then sold the farm when he was in his early 50s. That was partly because my Aunt Grace suffered from asthma so acutely that they had to move to Phoenix, Arizona for her health. I was right out of high school and had just entered the service when this happened. It had a profound effect on my life because when I saw him in early retirement, it planted a seed in my mind that I could do likewise. So when I thought of a career, I thought of retiring early to follow in Uncle Alex's footsteps.

That probably wasn't the primary reason I joined the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), but it was in my intention and I could have retired from the FAA at 46 as I said before. That's why, when I started my company Adams & Adams, I had a 10-year retirement plan. I am sure most businessmen and entrepreneurs would consider this utter fantasy. But I didn't ask them and I didn't share this with them. It's something that I held within my own belief system. If it had not have been for my second divorce, I would have been able to retire at 46. The month I made my last payment to my second wife, I sold the company.

One day, I realized the company did not need me anymore. That is when I decided to say goodbye. Now, I watch from the sidelines as it grows and prospers. I receive dividends while I am free to write, speak and build a *Life Without Limits*. You create shackles for yourself rather than wings if you build a company that is totally dependent upon you.

Contemplative Business

Even before you get to your place of business, you need time to contemplate and reflect. Often, I get up early to plan my day, read, meditate and write. Then I am centered and ready to take on the frenzy of the business day. As a business owner or manager, our job is to think, plan, create, and innovate. We are leaders and guides. People expect us to know the next step, have the big picture and a vision. To do that, we need quiet time to go within and discover the answers.

At Adams and Adams, unless I had an early morning appointment, I would not get to the office until late morning. However, when I did arrive I was clear about what my plan was for the day. Our business was primarily a nighttime cleaning operation. Because the real action happened after the end of normal business hours, I rarely got home for dinner, often staying in the office or out in the field until late at night.

Later, as the company grew, I began to take off on Fridays and worked at my Mystic house. There, I could sit in the backyard next to the woods, surrounded by nature and warmed by the sun, to write proposals, develop systems, and call customers. I must admit that Friday's work often spilled over into the weekend, but it was pleasurable and productive doing it in a different venue with a minimum of interruptions, at a more relaxing pace.

Now I am taking myself away to *Miracles* or another peaceful place to write because the distractions at my office are too great. Cemeteries are great places to find solitude. Yes! Graveyards. There I find nature, history and spirits galore in perfect peace. All of us need to do whatever works for us to find a place to concentrate and enjoy unencumbered creativity.

Retreats

One winter, I took a week away to read and study Peter Drucker's *Managing for Results* on the beach at Lauderdale by the Sea. I returned filled with new ideas and answers to many questions. Another time, at a friend's condo in Pompano Beach, I worked all week by the pool on a big cleaning proposal. I have disappeared to the library or the boat dock to write or work on a new business system. One spring, I rented a room for five days at the Willows Motel in Charleston, Rhode Island to write a training manual. If I had not gone away, I would have given in to distractions.

Diversions

The opposite of using our time away from the office wisely is to waste that precious time on activities that do not benefit our mission and purpose. I recall a consultant who was helping me with a business plan who I noticed expended an enormous amount of effort at Chamber of Commerce functions and teaching at business seminars. It became clear to me that he was not taking care of his real business. Or was he? Now, he teaches business courses at the local community college, getting paid for his real passion.

Recently, I found myself devoting more time to helping create an association devoted to promoting spirit at work, and assisting a friend put together yoga retreats on St John in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Dee, my office manager, did not say much about this at our weekly *VisionQuest* meetings, but she knew I was diverting my attention to another spiritual journey to avoid facing my fear of failure as a writer and speaker. Once I refocused on my calling, we began to get back on course. Again, I was reminded that these *Principles and Practices* are as much for me as anyone.

An associate of mine in a carpet cleaning business partnership, Ray spent considerable time promoting the business at trade shows and other gatherings. Their small company was marketed with a big enterprise scope complete with billboard advertising and radio commercials. Ray was responsible for that end of the business. Eventually the partnership ended and Ray went into broadcasting to fulfill his passion.

Another story is told by Brian Tracy, a great business teacher and one of my first corporate mentors. At one of his seminars, he met a woman who owned a real estate agency. She complained about having trouble meeting her sales goals. When Brian asked her what she wanted most in life, she replied that she just wanted to make lots of money and get out of this “damn business.” Without a change of attitude or a change of heart she would never meet her objectives.

Escape Or Renewal

If you start to take time away from your business to escape it, if it starts to cause you nightmares or feels like it is imprisoning you, you may be in the wrong profession. Occasionally we need to put some space between what we love and ourselves. Building a business can be fearful, but after mounting each new hurdle we experience a feeling of exhilaration and renewed confidence. Then we are ready for the next challenge. The next hurdle, the next day or month, may seem like torture. Then it is time to re-evaluate your intentions and desires; revisit the Principles and Practices and you will find new direction.

Symptoms of overload, burnout, and imbalance begin to disappear when we surrender to that Power greater than ourselves, whether we call it the Christ, Buddha, Allah, or the Higher Self. We need to know when to quit and go home or take time off. Often I did not, and now I regret that. We all know that a full life is a matter of proper equilibrium. Balance begins by

staying in touch with our needs, as well as the needs of others. Our health and wellness enables us to nourish the soul of our company.

Rest, relaxation and contemplation are essential to the health and wellness of the corporate Soul.

Meeting Humor

Principle Four reminds me that starting a meeting with lightness and humor lays the foundation for its effectiveness. Truly, laughter in the workplace is the first sign of health and well being. It breaks the tension as it creates a relaxing chemical reaction in the body. I have had the privilege of visiting thousands of companies since I started in business. I am always intrigued to see that, just like an individual, each company has its own personality. The most successful ones are often those with a lighthearted approach to working. They have cartoons and numerous sayings on the bulletin boards. Each person's work area is individualized with his or her own favorite humorous sayings. The atmosphere can often be chaotic and loud with a lot of puns and laughter. These companies take their business and customers seriously, yet they do not hesitate to poke fun at one another and this crazy world in which we live.

I could always measure the amount of healthy free spirit in our own company by the humor that occurred outside my office door. My office was at the end of a hall that acted like a funnel for conversation, noise, and laughter from the cluster of cubicles that made up our operations area. The noise could sometimes be a distraction and irritation. Yet, I always reminded myself, as I gently closed the door, that all the commotion was a symptom of our corporate well being. A quiet, somber workplace is a sure sign of faltering morale and corporate illness.

Good humor is evidence of not only a healthy company, but also a healthy person. Many examples have proved that laughter emits healing chemicals into our system. A good one is the story of Norman Cousins, who was Editor-in-Chief of the *Saturday Evening Post*. Cousins was hospitalized with a terminal illness. He decided that if he was going to die, he might as well die happy, so he invited his friends to bring funny movies to his hospital room and laugh it up. They carried on so much that Cousins and his friends were asked to leave. They continued their laugh therapy at Cousins' home. He eventually recovered fully from his illness. He wrote a book about it called *Anatomy of an Illness*.

Years ago, I attended a workshop at Asnuntuck Community Technical College given by Joyce Saltman, a laugh therapist. The whole day was devoted to humor and laughter as well as recognition of our individual uniqueness. During the day, anyone could request a standing ovation from the entire audience at any time. When was the last time you had a standing ovation? Picture yourself successfully telling your favorite joke or story and getting that recognition. Doesn't it feel wonderful?

Dance As If No One Is Watching

Music and dance also release our spirit to play, create and innovate. This art form is recognized and appreciated universally for putting our words, feeling and energy, our very being, into a harmonious flow. It transcends language, as well as cultural, national and religious boundaries. I sense that something is missing when music and movement are left out of an event that I am attending. Music and dance are basic forms of expression that belong with us in school, church, social activities, business, and leisure. The most famous and infamous leaders in history have used music to instill team spirit, a sense of oneness, and inspiration. Marching cadence has been used to rally the spirits of soldiers for centuries. Hitler's Third

Reich employed the music of Wagner in propaganda films and gatherings. The hymns and chants used in religious ceremonies are repeated to bring the worshippers to a place of ecstasy, and every country has a patriotic anthem to arouse the audience to a place where they are willing to die for the good of their homeland.

Music sets the mood. Studies have proved that the use of different types of music will bring about different intrinsic and extrinsic results from the listeners. Just consider an audience's reaction to a favorite rock group. What is your favorite love song? How about your favorite hymn or chant? And doesn't our National Anthem bring tears to your eyes?

I attended an Anthony Robbins Personal Power weekend several years ago. As strangers waiting in the hotel lobby to get into the conference area, we could hear music vibrating behind the big brown, padded, leather doors. When the doors swung open, we poured in to the sounds of rock 'n roll. Within a half an hour, Robbins had us standing on our chairs dancing to the music and giving one another back and neck massages. It was the best icebreaker I have ever witnessed. Periodic music breaks kept our spirit and energy high all weekend. The forces of music and dance, when used appropriately and effectively, can inspire action toward the mission of your organization by facilitating team creativity, innovation and energy.

Rock On

This does not mean your company needs to be rocking in the aisles to be healthy, but it does remind us of the value and richness of the underlying traits of your company. Encouraging humor, music, and movement in your company sets the mood for a lasting romance within your team. These are cultural mores that connect the members of your "tribe." Other forms of movement can encourage team spirit, healthy competition, and sportsmanship, such as after-hours sports, a walk for charity, or yoga classes offered at lunch hour. Anything

that promotes or enhances the physical and mental health of individual company members strengthens its competitive advantage.

Balance

A company is only as healthy as its members are. Promote programs of physical, intellectual and spiritual health and well being in your organization. Begin by serving as an example to your team. Bring in a Yoga master or a dance or laugh therapist. Your competition may laugh at you, but you'll have the last laugh.

Don't keep their noses to the "grindstone." *Vitalize your work force through essential wellness programs of mind, body, and spirit.* Rest, relaxation and contemplation are also important. These are other examples of the upside down approach that you will enjoy and benefit by as an enlightened business leader.

"Necessity may be the mother of invention, but play is certainly the father."

— Roger VonOech

SUMMARY

Thank you for joining me on this journey of business transformation. Writing *Miracles at Work*, my first book, has been one of my greatest challenges. Enormous effort often breeds monumental results. Before I discovered *A Course in Miracles*® (ACIM), I had never met an author. Now I am one.

Although this book is not solely based on A Course In Miracles®, that has been my personal spiritual path and salvation. There are many paths that reach the same summit. They all progress on the compassion of our Divine Unity through the triumph of love over fear.

Writing *Miracles at Work* has reminded me once again that we understand more inherently what we teach. We all share the role of teachers and students. So, along the way, I rediscovered over and over again the meaning and purpose of these Principles and Practices. They have transformed our business, *Life Without Limits*, from a “doing” company to a “being” company—being in the sense that now I am ready to let go and allow my Inner Guide to lead the way.

Trust, surrender and forgiveness are not easy for the ego to accept, but the result of this continual spiritual practice will be a revelation in your whole experience of work. The change could be so dramatic that you will begin to accept your true greatness and that of others. Then we will meet together on that path that leads to a *Life Without Limits*.

Remember.....

Always expect Miracles

because....

Something Wonderful Is About To Happen!