

“Faith is the opposite of Fear.” – Jon Mundy

THE SIXTH PRACTICE: Conquer Your Fear Of Success

Monday Mourning

I do not want you to think I was never afraid as we built Adams and Adams. Often, I was downright numb with fear. Fortunately, it did not debilitate me. Mondays were very difficult days for me, especially when the company became large.

When I arrived at our office after a weekend in Mystic, I felt burdened by the immensity of responsibility for hundreds of people cleaning millions of square feet of office space. I walked past the front office, saying hello to our two administrative assistants who were working feverishly. I passed our human resources director’s office, our office manager’s space, company vice president and a line of managers’ desks. Only then would I reach my large office with its oversized cherry desk. *The Small Business Leader of the Year Award* from The Hartford Chamber of Commerce was perched on the corner like a small replica of a cemetery monument. The tall, cherry bookcase held volumes of books on business, philosophy and literature. Next to the books were audio tape programs of book titles such as *The New Lead the Field* by Earl Nightingale, *Organizational Life Cycles* by Ichak Adizes, and *Love is Letting Go of Fear* by Gerry Jampolsky. Projects were lined up on the right side of my desk in two rows, one overlapping the other. Behind my desk, on the credenza, was another row of tasks that would never get completed unless they were moved up to a higher priority in the first two rows.

The most important document sat in the middle of my desk on the blotter. It was the weekly cash flow report. By now, our company needed more in a week just to meet payroll

and expenses than I had made in a whole year as an Air Traffic Controller. I felt a deep emptiness in the pit of my stomach and wondered how I could ever stay on the back of this wild, furious business animal. If I fell off, it would devour me.

My mind would search in amazement for the answers to how it all worked, all these people working in so many different locations—many without direct supervision. At some of the big jobs like Lego Systems and Lockheed Martin, I needed the site manager to show me around. Believe me, at moments like that I felt very alone, scared, and powerless.

That is actually the point. I realized I was not in charge—that a Higher Power was really calling the shots for me. To find peace of mind in all that was now so much larger than me, I surrendered. I turned all power, control, and the outcomes over to the Universe. I began to trust that my destiny and the future of the corporation were out of my hands. A calm self-assurance came over me as I turned it all over to God.

Success does not come from behind a desk—it comes on the front lines. As a peacemaker, I am not certain why I use a military term to describe working with one's team. As an Army veteran, I am very familiar with the use of the term “front lines” and the organization and staffing of fighting troops, but the concept originally came from a speech given by Ross Perot at an *Inc Magazine* “Growing the Company” conference in New Orleans. His speech emphasized that to become a successful business leader, you must get “down in the trenches with your troops.”

Getting Out

As a business owner or manager, you may discover that there is a tendency to hide in the comfort zone of your office with your head buried behind reports, status sheets and other

paperwork, or your eyes glued to the computer. I have seen it happen in our company, both by our managers and myself.

Staying back in headquarters may feel safe, but when we are behind the lines, we get a false sense of being in control. There, you are not exposed to the daily bombardment of issues and problems that you encounter if you go out with the members of the company where the real work gets done. Those front lines, for me, were the office buildings we cleaned. There was nothing like stripping a tile floor or cleaning a bunch of bathrooms to get me back to the basic challenges that our members faced nightly.

For you, the front lines may be on the flight line, production floor, or locations where you meet with clients. It is here that you find out how you are doing by joining your team down where the dirty, messy and essential work gets done.

Time Killers

I have seen businesses fail because their owners were not able to get out from behind their desks and from beneath the paperwork. I watched a Chief Air Traffic Controller in the FAA who scuttled his career because he was not able to get off the telephone. The receiver seemed surgically attached to him. To avoid unnecessarily long telephone conversations, I have learned to take calls using a cordless phone, standing up or moving around the office or backyard. It creates a sense of urgency about the call. It also allows you to use your body movements and gestures to emphasize your main points. Even though the caller cannot see you, they can feel your physical energy.

Long-winded telephone conversations can be a symptom of low self-esteem. We often do not know when or how to say “goodbye.” If standing or moving around is done in

the right way, it courteously conveys a message to the person on the other end of the line that the conversation is meant to move along.

Multi-tasking while on the phone is not the right way to converse. It is rude and the caller will know that you are not paying attention. Focus on the spirit of oneness with the caller. Be present for them and real conversation will occur.

The higher our position and the more freedom we have in determining how our workday is spent, the more discipline it takes to manage our time. As a business owner, the majority of our time should be spent analyzing the growth and development of our organization, planning the next step, strategizing (thinking and contemplating), and being out in the field doing internal (cheerleading) as well as external sales, marketing, and quality control. Hewlett Packard coined the term “management by wandering around.” I called it “cleaning toilets.” It is where the real money is made, where the rubber meets the road, or, should I say, the Johnnie brush meets the porcelain.

Experience Under Fire

At this juncture some of you might be saying, “All I do is work with our crew. There are only a handful of us and I am part of the operational workforce.” Of course, the owner of a start-up company or small enterprise is going to be hands-on most of the time. As our companies grow, we learn the art of delegating our operational duties until we do not have any more. Then, there comes the tendency to distance ourselves from our workers.

For the first ten years of Adams and Adams Building Services, I was involved in the start-up of every new job. I worked alongside the members of the company, emptying trash, doing the initial cleaning and detailed vacuuming at a new account, getting to know the ins and outs of the job. That way, I knew the account and the people who worked there. I could

not be deceived when told that a task could not be done, when I had done it. A former business associate of mine was trained as an accountant, then owned a salvage business and, eventually, bought an existing janitorial company. He was forever trying to duplicate our efficiency to figure out how we achieved our high production rates. Since he never went out with his crews to clean or work on the line, he had to rely on the beliefs and misperceptions of his staff. Since Rob (my VP and now owner of Adams and Adams) and I started small and grew with the company, we knew all the aspects of the job and could demonstrate to new workers how the work was to get done.

Tribute To The Master Cleaner

One of the first jobs we undertook was cleaning a restaurant and pub in the morning. My seventy-three-year-old mother helped me clean that place. We did it together in an hour-and-a-half, even on a Tuesday morning after they had served Monday night nickel beers. Hundreds of swizzle sticks had been thrown all over the floor and disgusting things dripped off the men's room walls. Now I wonder why we did it, but, back then, it was a good paying job and we needed the business. Then I hired two young men to do the same job; it took them twice as long. It was not hard to justify that it could be done in an hour-and-a-half, when I pointed to my dear little mother and informed those two eighteen-year-olds that she was the pacesetter. This was not a "slave-driving" pace, however. Much of it was based upon "working smarter, not harder," as Rob would say.

My mother deserves so much credit for enabling Adams and Adams to become a reality. It was Mom who taught me how to clean. With a BA in Political Science, certification as an air traffic controller, management training and enough courses and workshops to qualify for an advanced degree, I learned from Mom about how to really make

a good living. During those first years she lived with my daughter Sandy and me. Mom was always ready to pull on her sneakers whenever I needed her help. I can still hear her saying, “I’ll help you Jackie.” Even though she is now ninety-three, that earlier response to my need still brings constant gratitude as it echoes in my heart.

30-Minute Quality Control

Being out in the trenches, working with our teams, also enables us to see, first-hand, the problems, difficulties and challenges they face. It is a place where our “still, small voice” tells us whether things are going right or not. Often the members of our company tell us what we want to hear. It is up to us to read between the lines, ask the right questions, and listen for the answers that are drowned out by false pride. In half an hour, I could make a sweep through a 100,000 square foot, four-story office building and discover where the problem areas were. Such a building took seven, part-time cleaning specialists four hours each to clean. In that thirty minutes, I could also find out where we shined and gain a picture of how we were doing at that location. Then I could spend some time helping people empty trash, clean bathrooms, or dust mop floors to see what their impression was of the company and our leadership.

This is not to say we did quality control on a wing and a prayer. We had a unique “Pride in Performance” system to “Inspect What We Expected,” that was associated with our Recognition and Awards Program, which is explained in detail in our upcoming separate companion book, *Cleaning Up: The Action Book to Miracles at Work: Building Your Business From The Soul Up*.

Walking Through Our Fears

Inevitably, getting out of our comfort zones, from behind the desk and out of the office, enables us to see things more clearly and alleviates many of our fears. What we fear is the unknown. We need to walk through the unknown, discover it with all its pain, mystery and pleasure. Once we have done that, we can sleep better knowing that we are on top of things. When our company became very big. I had to ask our building manager to show me around some of the larger buildings we cleaned, such as Lego Systems or General Dynamics, where we employed thirty or more cleaning specialists during three shifts a day. By then, the company had grown to over three hundred members, with a dozen managers and twenty or more building supervisors. These men and women were now responsible for keeping on top of things. My responsibility was to meet them on the front lines and observe their leadership. It was tempting for me to stay in the office, but I knew that was not where I belonged.

Fresh Mind

Leading from a “front line” perspective helps prevent unfair judgment and criticism. If the experience feels uncomfortable, it is working. It stretches us past the confines of our current routine. When I practice yoga, I know a position that results in comfort is not being done correctly – that is, with the possible exception of the “corpse” or “child” pose, my favorite resting positions. Our bodies, as well as our minds, need flexing which opens us up to more understanding of each others’ experiences. For me, travel creates a fresh mind. When I see things for the first time, all my senses are open to the experience. They are so open that I cannot help but take mental and written notes to recapture the experience to share with others. The more I see of the world, the more I realize that my perception of its people and its cultures is flawed. When we venture into the world of our company members and work with them, we too begin to see differently and are not so quick to judge.

The judgment process always begins with our own self-condemnation. After a recent Artist's Way® weekend with Julia Cameron, I began to name my voices of doom and gloom. One, in particular, I call *Chester the Critic*, who is there to tell me what a failure I am. Nothing I do is good enough for Chester. Then there is *George the Judge*, who sees all the faults in others starting with their body. "Look how fat she's gotten!" "He looks so old and sloppy." "Nice butt, awful face." And one just called, *Oh, Shit. Oh, Shit!* I followed the wrong channel marker and almost went aground. *Oh Shit!* "I'm late again." *Oh Shit!* "Now I've done it!"

Finally, I said, "Shut up, all of you! You are not the truth." If we were to silence those voices – or put a gag in their mouths by refusing to take them seriously—we would set ourselves free. Don't take a low profile. Get big and stand up to that fear of success. That fear is as debilitating as fear of failure.

Our next Practice is also about getting out from behind the desk. It is the best sales method I know and what enabled our company to beat the competition. Are you ready to *Open Doors the Easy Way?*

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" — Luke 6:37

***“One can win the attention
and time and cooperation of even
the most sought after people
by becoming genuinely interested in them.”***

— Dale Carnegie