

The Mirror and the Wake up Call!

There are two metaphors I would like to focus on in this article. They are “looking in the mirror” and “getting a wake up call”.

To be successful in leadership or in life you need to be able to do some self reflection to understand how you operate and evaluate how things are working for or against you. We all look in the mirror to see how we look on the outside; as a coach I challenge people to look inside. Looking is part of the process and the other important (and often missed) part is the decision to change something.

It is possible to own a mirror and never look at it. It is possible to look at it and not see what is really there. It's also possible to look in the mirror and see what is there. This brings us to the second part of the puzzle. You might see yourself looking in the mirror but if it is before the wake up call you can write it off as just a dream, not real.

We can all relate to getting a wake up call at a hotel, often really early in the morning before a flight. When you get the wake up call you tend to wake up. There is often a lot at stake if you don't. For many in life when the wake up call comes or the alarm goes off on a typical day it is easy to go back to sleep or hit the snooze button.

Life and leadership can send us wake up calls in many forms. They could be things like losing a job, being told that there are problems brewing, the death of some one you know, scary news about your health, a spouse talking about divorce, or seeing a picture of yourself that doesn't look like the view you have from inside. They come in many forms and we get to choose if we pay attention or not. If we choose to hit the snooze button, there is a good chance we are still asleep. When you are asleep at the wheel there is a good chance that something bad will happen. (Oops, that's a third metaphor!)

I had a wake up call this month. Actually I had the same wake up call twice. The first time I hit the snooze button. The second time I became very awake.

We get so used to seeing things the way we think they are that we believe that is how they actually are. We might see ourselves as we have been programmed or trained to see ourselves - and that might not be an accurate picture of who we are. Is that really who we are or is it who we've become accustomed to believing we are? When someone declares “I am always late” they act as if they have no choice in being late or on time. We can wake up to the fact that to lead ourselves effectively we need to understand that we are always in choice.

Shelley MacDougall and I interviewed Kurt Kuebler in July for our Extraordinary Leader Program. When he talked about the characteristics of leaders that he emulates we could quickly see that those attributes are choices any of us could make. Kurt is in a business where organizations take a very close look at the person to see if they are worthy to lead their organization. What if we took a very close look at the person that is given the responsibility of leading our life? Who would we choose? Hopefully ourselves!

On most days I am pleased that I am the one leading my life but those snooze button days make me wonder. I got a call a few weeks ago because there was an urgent need for my blood type. I went to donate blood and discovered my blood pressure was high. It was high enough that they wouldn't take my blood. They told me to go to a doctor immediately. Snooze button! I went five days later and the doctor gave me a pretty serious wake up call. Now I am awake and looking in the blood pressure mirror everyday to make sure it is where it is supposed to be.

Think about the mirrors you use to look at how you are operating. How about the mirrors that indicate how your business is operating? When it comes to health there are lots of measurable indicators and then there is being aware of how you feel and what your energy is like. In business or personal relationships you receive a lot of indicators about how you are doing. The problem is that a lot of the time one's energy is spent defending against or discounting the feedback. In business there are a lots metrics to show how the organization is doing. If you are interested in learning about some of the things coaches work on to support people in living the lives they consciously design, call me at 1-866-822-3481 or e-mail me at kmacdonald@dccnet.com

Here are the few things that you can do with Shelley or me to get a better understanding of you.

- Identify your personal values
- Identify your personal needs
- Identify the things you are tolerating
- Identify the elements of your personal foundation
- Fill out a wheel of life
- Identify the obstacles from within that get in the way of your success
- Confirm that your daily habits are in alignment with your goals

There are times when the wake-up call can wake us up. Wake up calls can be uncomfortable and painful. Waking up on your own without an alarm might be the way to go.