

Waking Up in Time for a Course Correction

Two years ago Shelley and I had the opportunity to interview a young couple who rowed a boat across the Atlantic Ocean from the Canary Islands to Antigua. They had a fascinating story full of adventure, challenge and the opportunity to have new beliefs about themselves. There were times in their 84 day journey where the seas were so rough that they just had to stop rowing and take shelter in the small covered part of the boat. When the storms subsided they would come out and determine where they were. They would get the opportunity to see how far off course the storms had taken them.

Their waking up to calm seas and having a chance to check in on their course is a great metaphor for all of us in our lives and our careers. When we wake up we can see things differently. There is clarity and a focus that is not possible when we're trudging through in fatigue and stress. The question is in our lives and careers, when do we wake up in a way that allows us to consider whether a course correction is necessary. Some never do. Some awaken when there is a seemingly catastrophic event like the loss of a job or a significant change in their lives. You can be jolted awake, you can be encouraged by someone else's waking up, or perhaps one day you just decide. For this young couple, staying on course in their small row boat was a daily discipline and possibly a matter of life and death. For us, staying on course doesn't appear to be life and death. Maybe that's why we don't check in as frequently. But as sure as there were costs to this young couple for going off course, there are costs in our lives and careers when we do as well. The idea of making sure you are on course assumes that you've set a destination in the first place. If that destination is set, how do you keep yourself on track? In our career, going off course can show up as complacency, a great deal of effort going into things that don't matter, being so overwhelmed by the elements that the destination is out of sight and perhaps the worst thing, just falling short of our potential. Those costs can lead to losing jobs, marriages, families, careers and opportunities. Maybe the worst thing is we lose ourselves.

Some people may view their career or their lives as a vast ocean that they're just bobbing around on. It's as if they're assuming whatever course they're on is the one they are supposed to be on, without having consciously committed to it. If you have no clear direction, no destination in mind, then there may not be a reason to wake up or no particular course to correct. This doesn't mean that it's too late to wake up and create one. The hard part is that bobbing along in the ocean can be quite pleasant and comfortable and there's no need to get to any given place at any particular time. It can almost be desirable. So when we decide whether the pain or the pleasure of bobbing is greater, that may be the point where we wake up.

We are habitual beings. We love habit and routine and we train ourselves to do and think the same things over and over. What if we have a habit of going off course? The truth is many of us do and we do it so well that we can forget to take the time to check in. My two questions for you in this article are: are you awake? And is it time for a course correction?

#1 – Are you awake?

In nautical terms, a better question might be, are you in the fog? You may feel like you're awake but maybe you just can't see. Or perhaps what you see is just a mirage. If you are questioning this it might

be time to check in with someone who can see from the outside, who can support you in clearly defining your destination and establishing the checkpoints or a virtual GPS system. Another way of checking in is with your gut. How do you feel? Are you happy? Are you feeling fulfilled? Do you have a passion and an energy that fuels you? Are you getting the kind of results that you want to get? And are you inspiring others to do the same?

#2 – Is it time for a course correction?

You get to decide! Beyond deciding what course you will take, you get to decide whether or not you will even take one and if you don't, someone else, the elements, the economy, old programming, or something else will set the course for you.

You could make a regular habit of the awakening process; maybe you can set a date monthly or yearly to check to see where you are on your course. Attaching yourself to a structure or an external navigation system can keep you on track. If you need support either in waking up or in considering a course correction, please take advantage of the coaching benefit that is available to you as a member of CMAA. By accessing coaching you will have the benefit of working with someone who has taken many people on this journey. Access to coaching tools and a system of support and accountability may make a difference in getting you to your chosen destination.

This young couple was in a race. Although they did not win, the race taught them a lot about themselves and a lot about success. The truth is that after 84 days of pain and suffering, and with their destination in sight, they didn't want it to end. Enjoy the journey!