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Newsletter
December 2010

Editor's Note

By Raj Narayan, ISEC Editor

Decades ago when management tomes were written by academicians and professors, the titles were bland. Remember books like "In search of Excellence" (Tom Peters), "Managing for Results" (Peter Drucker) and "The Peter Principle (Dr. Laurence Peters)? When high-flying CEOs shared their successes, the titles became dramatic. "Who says Elephants can't Dance" (Louis V. Gerstner) and "Only the Paranoid Survive" (Andy Grove) are prime examples.

Living in times, where the executive usually operates in a high stress environment, it is the book by Andy Grove, which told the story of a Hungarian Jew's experiences while transforming Intel from a memory chipmaker to the world's largest producer of microprocessors that set me thinking.

I am now asking myself a serious question and in doing so possibly questioning the book that influenced me. **"Only the Paranoid Survive... but, Do These Survivors Let Others Survive too?** Upon mulling this disturbing thought, a casual chat I had with a co-passenger on Tamil Nadu Express flooded back from memory. Here is how it progressed:

Passenger: Sir, I see you are reading a book with an interesting title. What is it about and if you are okay, may I have a quick browse while you eat your lunch?

Me: But of course! The book is about the world's greatest business turnaround and written by the man who piloted it. You can take a look though I am a quick eater and may not allow you too much time to browse the book.

Passenger: Thank you sir. I got interested because I never realized that paranoia could have such an impact too."

Me: Why do you think so? I always thought paranoia about success brought out the best out of us. What other impact does it bring?

Passenger: Tell me why does a person become paranoid?

Me: Well, maybe because he is not sure of himself and his abilities or he wants to stay put in his position.

Passenger: Paranoia is described as a mental 'disorder' that often occurs due to baseless or excessive suspicion of others' motives. Maybe, we become paranoid because we're unsure of ourselves or maybe we do not want to let go of what we have and in attempting to guard our positions, we become paranoid.

Me: So, isn't that what I said? So, are you saying that paranoia is not really a good feeling?

Passenger: Well, I am not sure. It's only that the paranoid often make things worse for those around them. They play politics by which I mean they play the man, not the ball during a game. How can that be good?

Now, more than a decade later, I came across a scenario where a manager constantly faulted a subordinate but avoided direct communication to resolve a problem. At first, I was all ears and put on my coaching cap to work with this member of her team on aspects that the manager pointed out to me. "She misses meetings and isn't on



top of things" was the first complaint.

I worked patiently over two weeks and resolved this when the complaint changed, "she just does what she's told and isn't adding value" was the next refrain. Upon asking for specifics, I received no examples, nor was it clear what the expectation was. Though I started working with the subordinate, something rankled in my mind.

And the inevitable didn't take long to play out as the manager was "talked to" by his boss and asked to shape up or ship out. Within days the second eventuality happened and the subordinate found herself in her ex-manager's chair, making me somehow feel like a used piece of office stationery!

Ruminating over this event, I suddenly realized that it was paranoia about a subordinate that caused all this trouble. The manager was just not comfortable with his subordinate because he saw in her his successor. This clearly was a case of paranoia leading a person to sabotage not just a career but also a division or even a company.

In this issue of our newsletter we have included an article by the famous leadership coach, Marshall Goldsmith who has illustrated this point in some detail. If you would like to comment on this topic, do mail me on editor@isecindia.in

MENTOR'S MUSINGS: *Infinite possibilities, Definite Directions*

By Krishna Kumar, ISEC Founder-Director

"If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there," is a message that the Cheshire Cat conveys to a confused Alice, in "Alice in Wonderland." What the magical cat is helpfully reminding Alice to do is to set out a meaningful path to travel.

Similarly, any meaningful coaching exercise begins with setting goals. We are often unaware of our goals; goals that usually derived from our dreams and lurking passions. It is left to the coach to unlock these dreams and help us discover our calling in life.

A young tennis player dreams about winning a Grand Slam. Another might be content to drive a Formula I car but not race competitively. A third might set a goal that is linked to career or family. The coach helps take that first giant step in the process to reach the goal. However, the common thread that runs through these varying ambitions is that all of them, at varying stages, will experience confusion, a lack of self-confidence and have second thoughts about the direction that they have set for themselves.

Again, it is at these stages that coaching serves as a powerful medium to assist an individual in maintaining her focus on achieving the stated objectives. Often, the goal-post might shift and the direction may alter but the change will be one that is desired by the client.

Change is never easy. Harvard Professor, Elizabeth Moss Kanter, writes in her book *The Change Masters*: "Change is a threat when done to me, but an opportunity when done by me." People are comfortable accepting change when it is based on things that they already want, in which case it is met with enthusiasm and commitment.

A good coach works with clients to identify starting goals, navigate changes to these goals as they progress and ensure that the client deals with change positively and courageously.

As ISEC's bye-line sums up, the coach assists the client in discovering Infinite Possibilities leading to Definite Directions.

In your experience have you encountered challenges while setting goals for yourself? If yes, look around for a qualified coach or mentor to assist you in your journey. And, for more inputs on goal-setting, please feel comfortable in mailing me on kk@intradconsult.com .



Coaching Notes: CEOs: Don't Sabotage Your Successors

By Marshall Goldsmith

A few years ago, I learned a very important lesson about leadership succession during a coaching assignment. In my work, I get paid only if my clients achieve positive, lasting change in behavior. I did get paid for this assignment, but I found that I would rather not have taken it.

A CEO asked me to coach his potential successor, the CFO. It didn't take long before I just felt that the CEO just didn't like the CFO. I had the distinct feeling that he really didn't want this guy to get the job.

I brought it to his attention: "I just don't think you like the CFO." I said.

"He's not my favorite person. But, I guess I like him O.K.," the CEO told me.

I wasn't convinced. "Look, it's just you and me talking here. There is no reason to play games with me," I said. "If you don't want him to get this job, why are we even having this conversation? I don't even know this guy. I don't care if he becomes the CEO or not. Why would you want me to coach him ... or to work on developing him as your successor, if you really don't want him to have the job?"

"You're right!" he grunted. "I think he's kind of a jerk. I've never liked him very much ... even though I've tried."

GUT CHECK

He replied, "I have to admit, he has made a tremendous contribution in helping our company. We have done a fantastic turnaround ... without him it would have been impossible. If your coaching process can really help him improve his interpersonal skills, he deserves to be the CEO of the company."

I was still skeptical. "Are you sure?" I asked.

I think so ... no, I am positive," he replied.

"If he makes great improvement in the interpersonal areas that we discussed, are you going to recommend him to be your successor?" I asked. "Are there any other reasons he may not get the job, such as a lack of technical or functional skills?"

"No, along with being great in finance, he is strong enough in all of the other functions to do a fine job as the chief executive," the CEO concluded. "His only issues revolve around interpersonal behavior."

A SINGLE DETRACTOR

I worked with the CFO for more than a year, and all but one of his raters said they saw him as making great improvements in interpersonal relationships. Can you guess who was the only person to see "no change?" That's right: It was the CEO.

The CFO confronted the CEO and pointed out that everyone else gave him high marks for having improved his interpersonal relationships. Still, the CEO did not recommend him for the big job. The CEO finally ... and very reluctantly ... admitted that the CFO had in fact made great improvements where he was supposed to, which was of course clearly documented and hard to dispute. However, the CEO now concluded that the CFO lacked the "adequate marketing skills." This was odd, as it was the CEO who had told me a year earlier that the CFO's marketing skills were just fine.

The CFO was understandably upset. He had been promised the big job if he improved his interpersonal skills, which he had. He pointed out this fact, as well as the fact that he had turned down other, lucrative offers in anticipation of getting the CEO job. He went to the board and let the members in on what had happened. Basically, he told the board, "Either make me the new CEO ... or write me an extremely large check."

The board knew the CFO had been made a promise that was unfairly reneged on, and the directors opted to write an extremely large check. Because the CFO had improved, I was paid for my coaching, but I still regretted taking the assignment. Looking back, I feel I was used as a pawn in a political chess match. The CEO had given the green

light to my being hired while believing that the CFO wouldn't improve. When he did, the CEO pulled the "lacks marketing skills" card out from up his sleeve. All of our hard work ... the CFO's, his team's, mine ... cost the company lots of money and wasted time. (Well, actually, the time wasn't wasted: The CFO did improve interpersonally, and he felt he could use in the future what he had learned during our work together.)

DON'T FOOL YOURSELF

Since that coaching opportunity, I have had many other experiences that reinforce my belief that, if you, the leader, don't want a potential successor to have your job, you are likely to sabotage or at least be less than helpful in the succession process.

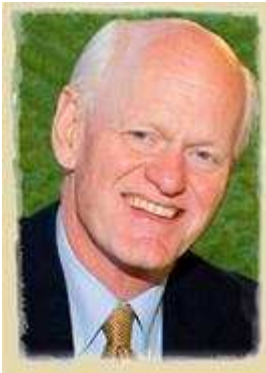
The most famous quotation illustrating this point came from Henry Ford II. When asked why he didn't promote Lee Iacocca to the top job, he replied, "Sometimes you just don't like somebody."

What can you, the leader, learn from this story? If you really don't want a potential successor to get the job, don't fool yourself or your potential successor. You will look for problems until you find a reason to cut him or her out of the running.

PREFERENCES AND REQUIREMENTS

Before you write off a potential successor, look in the mirror. Maybe the problem is you. My friend Roosevelt Thomas is an expert in diversity. He addresses the favoritism issue by encouraging executives to differentiate between preferences, which are personal and relate to you as an individual, and requirements, which are organizational and relate to the job. If your dislike for a potential successor is just a matter of personal preference and the candidate is the most qualified person to help the company, get over yourself. Be open-minded about succession planning and try to help this person succeed.

It's better not to jerk around potential successors. It's not fair to them or to the company and shareholders. After careful analysis, if you don't want this person to be your successor, don't fake it. Don't pretend you are interested in developing him or her for the job. Work with someone you can support. If you cannot find someone you can sincerely support, either stay in your job or look externally and start recruiting some new talent.



Dr. Marshall Goldsmith is a world authority in helping successful leaders get even better - by achieving positive, lasting change in behavior: for themselves, their people and their teams. He is the author of the many best-selling books that include, "What got you here won't get you there" and "Mojo-How to get it, How to keep it and How to get it back when you lose it."

ISEC Events:

ISEC Mentor Coach Certification workshop will be held on 21 & 22 January 2100 in Bangalore. **For details and to enroll in the program please visit**www.isecindia.in

**With warm regards,
Krishna Kumar
Executive Coach & Founder-Director, ISEC**