

In this Issue

- »» EDITORIAL
- »» Six Renewal Resources
- »» Coaching Notes: The Meaning of Education
- »» Reader Feedback

Newsletter
June 2010

EDITORIAL

By ISEC Founder-Director, Krishna Kumar

"Did you win?" Ask any player who has just returned after participating in a local tennis tournament and you will inevitably find that this is the question most often asked by parents, coaches and friends. The chances of being asked whether the player found joy and absorption in the actual game or during their interactions with rivals and mates is more remote than a sandstorm in the Arctic Circle.

Is winning in your control? There is a strong likelihood that most people would believe that they can, in fact, exercise this control. But, in actual fact, there are a number of factors that are outside your control like the quality of opposition, the playing conditions and nature of officiating and, a large slice of luck.

Some amongst you might continue to resist this argument. Let me try and persuade them by asking that they consider a hypothetical situation of playing a tennis match against Roger Federer. Now that winning is no longer a possibility, would they refuse to play the match?

We operate in an environment, both on and off the sports field, where success is often mistakenly measured rather simplistically in terms of mere wins and losses. This attitude can lead to a "winning-at-all costs" approach that in its make might give rise to instances of cheating, gamesmanship and unsportsmanlike behaviour. And, so we have the cliched argument that "All's fair in love and war".

Having said so, I am in no way advocating that players must not play to win. Players must, in fact, direct their full efforts towards winning the match and anything short of doing so would be a serious disrespect to themselves, their opponents and the game. What is important, however, is that our measure of success be determined by factors that lie within our control. These factors could include making the best effort, playing with a positive attitude and displaying the highest standards of sportsmanship.

In your opinion, do these factors reflect the corporate world's approach to winning? Do [mail me](#) your views.

I am pleased to publish an article "Six Renewal Practices" written by my good friend, John O'Neil. John. He is an outstanding leadership coach who has studied the impact on success on individuals and I am sure that our readers will derive great benefit from his writing.

Six Renewal Practices

By John O'Neil

For over 25 years, I have studied renewal practices. Over the years, certain questions kept jabbing at me. How is it that so many people never recover from the ego swelling that early success can bring?

For example, look at John Updike's character, Rabbit, stunted and forever defined by his high school athleticism. Why does defeat send some into a crippling depression while others spin failure into a luminous journey?

My search has been to find the common practices that set extraordinary characters apart-yet are available to any of us to apply in our own lives.

SIX KEY PRACTICES

The practices break down into six categories. There is considerable overlap among these categories, and individual

styles vary widely.

1. Retreating for renewal. This is the cornerstone practice; the capacity to step back from daily pressures, to let the soul breathe, to think deeply. To refresh and renew is the necessary first step toward renewal. Choices range widely: flying, fishing, walking, meditating and praying can all be retreats that renew.

The renewal benefits of retreat practices are many and varied. Some people report feeling refreshed, more relaxed, but energized. Others describe creative bursts, cracking open problems like fortune cookies. Others claim epiphanies, major life-changing insights that flow from retreats. The paradoxical aspects of retreats seem to be that the simple act of letting go of the daily, sweaty, swirling demands life produces higher order thinking, and improved solutions to life problems. Churchill wrote of the benefits of his painting retreats: "Change is the master key. It is only when new cells are called into new activity, when new stars become the lords of the ascendant, that relief, repose, refreshment are afforded."

2. Finding new learning curves. Long-distance leaders have the capacity to spot a decaying learning curve, to know when they have stopped growing. The modern mantra of enlightened organizations is continuous learning. All agree that fresh learning is imperative to handle the changes delivered by the massive backwash of global market forces. But what learning? What does each person learn at various life and career stages? Most managers fail at leadership tasks not because of ignorance about methods, skills, or processes-most fail because they have an inadequate emotional range, and they don't make the proper connections between seemingly disparate ideas and concepts. They fail at exerting the appropriate torque in motivating people. They fail at asking "why" questions. They fail to get ego out of the way. They fail because they grow stale.

People cling to spent learning curves for comfort or because they are afraid of the unknown. At the base of every new learning curve is a dark whirlpool of chaos. The security of the familiar must give way to the risk of failure. That's hard. What people don't see is that the other choice is riding the old learning curve too long on a guaranteed trip to stagnation. What they must come to appreciate is the deep satisfaction new learning brings. This appreciation starts with small efforts and grows very slowly at first.

3. Cultivating creativity. The virtues of creativity are obvious. We need more creative solutions to longstanding, intractable problems. Creativity produces a competitive advantage. Creativity adds beauty to our lives. However, long-distance leaders use creativity in a special way; it is the juice, the charge, and the healing path for them. They apply creative practices as a direct means of renewing themselves.

4. Setting guilt-free goals. Narrow, self-serving goals promote guilt. Again and again I encounter successful people who are sick at heart. The prize they pursued and won has turned to dust; the race over, they feel a dark loss. Trace elements of guilt remain in the psyche when we unconsciously outstrip our mothers and fathers, when we have so much when others have so little. Rooting out guilt can be hard work, even when awareness dawns. Practicing goal setting mindfully to avoid menacing guilt is a solid investment in prevention.

New goals cannot be put in place until the clarification of some old issues takes place. For each person, the way is different. For most it is sufficient to recall explicit parental expectations, stated or unstated, that still linger behind the curtains of daily performance and whisper, "That is not good enough." Some people need psychotherapy to throw their beasts to the ground; for others, small, daily practices of mindfulness are sufficient to keep guilt out of goal setting.

5. Developing strong psychic and spiritual immune systems. These include optimism, gratitude, humility, and altruism. It serves no useful purpose to separate out the toxins that harm the soul from those that weaken the psyche. When our spirit is sick, we are sick all over. There appear to be four elements to the immune system of the spirit: an earned optimism, an abiding gratitude, a deeply felt humility, and an exercise of altruism. I have deliberately stayed away from the word love, so hammered and worn it has become, but all of these elements contribute to acts of love or give rise to its expression.

6. Accumulating teachers, coaches, and mentors. It is always surprising to find how few people continue to enjoy the pleasure of learning under the wise gaze of a superb teacher. All long-distance winners treasure the company of learned people and go to great effort to find it.

The practices of long-distance leaders are neither exotic nor trivial. Renewal is the overarching goal, and there are no shortcuts. Each practice has the prospect for great satisfaction and provides the motivation needed when the flag touches the ground.

John O'Neil is currently the President of the Center for Leadership Renewal. He serves on several boards and is an author, speaker, and advisor on leadership issues, providing leadership advisement and development services to senior leaders serving across a wide range of organizations from start-ups to mature enterprises.



*John's book *The Paradox of Success* (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1993) has been a best seller in the U.S., Europe, Asia, and Australia and was reissued by the publisher in 2004 as one of the best business books of the decade. His book *Leadership Aikido* (Crown/Harmony, 1997) focuses on the practices of enduring and creative leaders. *Seasons of Grace* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003) co-authored with Alan Jones, Dean of San Francisco's Grace Cathedral, won the Nautilus Prize for Best in Spirituality category in 2004.*

Point to Ponder: Where does the word "educate" come from?

'Education' is known to have several root words. It is popularly known to be derived from the Latin root 'educio' meaning to 'educere' - to draw out - and, therefore, 'educere' which is derived from two roots 'e' and 'ducere' means to 'draw out from within' or to 'lead forth'. In other words, we can call the process of education as "extrusion" of thoughts and ideas from the student.

So the teacher draws out the potential and the gifts of the student. Looked at this way, education should take on a new meaning. In reality, how often do you suppose teachers approach education in this manner but instead take the "intrusion" route?

Reader Comment on Occam's Razor (ISEC Newsletter # 4):

Thank you for directing me to read **Occam's Razor**, which I have just done. So I'll just keep things simple and write about complicated and simple problems.

Sure, keep things simple. This is easier said than done. The moment we are born, we are conditioned by our family, our culture, our schooling, our society to make things complicated.

Every problem is a projection of our own mind. It can be as simple or as complicated as we construe it to be. If we look at the problem with a mind which tends to complicate things, the problem is complicated. If our mind looks at it with a mind which likes to simplify things, the problem is simple.

In other words, there are no such things as complicated problems or simple problems. Nor complicated solutions or simple solutions.

Only minds which complicate things. Or minds which simplify things.

Maurice Ting

CEO, The Durafil Research & Manufacturing Group, Hongkong

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

In partnership with Brefi Group (UK) we are conducting the following programs in July 2010

ISEC Level One Mentor Coach Certification: July 16-17, 2010

ISEC Level Two Personal Coach Certification: July 22-24, 2010

For detailed information on Coach Certification programs please visit our website www.isecindia.in

With warm regards,
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