

In this Issue

- »» Editor's Note
- »» Mentor's Musings
- »» Break the Glass!
- »» Coaching Notes: From Conformity to Mobility

Newsletter
September 2010

Editor's Note

By Raj Narayan, ISEC Editor

As a teenager, I was often confused by the conflicting definitions of work that my parents threw my way. While mom reiterated that "work was worship", dad asked me to choose a job I loved, as then I'd never have to work a day in my life.

Being a papa's boy and a sports enthusiast, I took up sports journalism because it not only involved being a part of the excitement but also hobnobbing with the icons. Within five years, I was promoted and it never felt like work even for a day! However, one fine morning in 1993, my boss called me over and asked me to take charge of the Business Bureau at the wire agency.

All hell broke loose within my mind which somehow contrived the promotion as a punishment for good work. Shifting uneasily in my trousers, I decided to call my parents for advice. My mother heard me out and quietly asked me how long I intended traveling around covering cricket?

And truth dawned! I honestly did not see myself covering cricket matches for the rest of my life. It was just a comfort zone I had created for myself. My boss had probably realized that I could manage a crack team to ride the wave of economic liberalization. It was a change that changed my entire outlook.

Those of us who've have read Dr. Spencer Johnson's "Who Moved My Cheese" may instantly relate to this frame of mind. In the book, the "Maze" represents the place you spend time seeking your call in life. It could be a workplace, your community, and your relationships or even your leisure location.

So, in some ways, chasing excellence may also mean chasing challenges...to go where one hasn't been. I recall the words of Captain James Kirk, the legendary space traveller of the super hit TV serial Star Trek who described the purpose of his wanderings as:

"To explore strange new worlds...

To seek out new life; new civilizations...

To boldly go where no one has gone before"

This issue of our newsletter compiles excerpts on this topic from internationally acclaimed books written by Paulo Coelho and Timothy Gallwey, which we hope you will find thought provoking.



MENTOR'S MUSINGS

By Krishna Kumar, ISEC Founder-Director

Do you, like Captain Kirk, often wish that you could boldly go where you haven't gone before, to bravely venture out to explore new worlds? Does the word "new" strike a chord every time you hear it, especially at the workplace?

In my coaching conversations with corporate executives it is not unusual to discover that the person dreams of pursuing a passion that is quite at divergence from her present occupation. For instance, a senior manager would like to become a university professor while another's hobby translates into setting up a school for photography. Essentially, the person observes a certain sense of ennui in the tasks that's coming along and wants

to move into a completely new realm.

"Finding new cheese" could be as simple as breaking away from your present role and trying out something totally different, but something that you always wanted to do. Let's say, you suddenly decide to move away from an incentive-linked marketing job to a role in people development?

It is indeed encouraging to note that I came across quite a few people who have actually had the courage to "break the glass" and pursue their dreams. One of my recent acquaintances actually decided to give up a cushy job in the IT sector to establish a motorcycle expedition business.

What's even more commendable to note among such people, often described rather inaccurately as mavericks, is that they had the courage of conviction to break out despite possibly not having found any support from their inner circle of friends. Reactions to such path-breaking thoughts usually range between a suggestive "why do you want to break something that's fixed" to the much less subtle "are you crazy" line.

And these comments cause a vast majority of us to quietly stow away our dreams into some distant corners of our minds.

So, what is it that actually holds back an individual from taking that big leap? As always, we look forward to receiving your comments for publication.

Do mail me your thoughts and comments at kk@intradconsult.com .

BREAK THE GLASS!

An extract from Paulo Coelho's book "By the river Piedra I sat down and wept"

I held his hand. He knew about the great mysteries of the Goddess, but he knew about as much about love as much as I; even though he had travelled so far.

And he would have to pay a price: the initiative. Because the woman pays the highest price: the surrender.

We held hands for a long time. I could see in his eyes the ancient fears that true love creates and proves. I read the memory of rejection from the previous night, the long time spent apart, the years in the monastery in search of a world where these things did not happen.

I could see in his eyes the thousands of times I could have imagined this moment, the scenarios built around us, the color of our hair and the color of my clothes. I wanted to say "yes", he would be welcome, that my heart had won the battle. I wanted to say how much I loved him, how much I desired the moment as well.

But I kept silent.

I watched, as if in a dream, his inner struggle. I saw that he had before him my "no", the fear of losing me, the harsh words he had heard in similar moments - because we all go through it, and accumulate scars.

His eyes began to shine. He knew I was winning all those barriers.

So I released one hand, grabbed a cup and put it at the edge of the table.

"It's going to fall," he said.

"Exactly. I want you to fall," I said.

"By breaking a glass?" he asked.

"Yes, by breaking a glass. A seemingly simple gesture, but it involves fears that we will never come to understand," I responded. "What's wrong with breaking a cheap glass, when we have all done this without meaning to at some point in our lives?"

"Breaking a glass?" he repeated, "Why?"

"I can give some explanations," I answered, "but to be truthful it's only for the sake of breaking it."



"For your sake?"

"Of course not."

He looked at the glass on the edge of the table, I could tell he was worried about it falling.

I wanted to say that it's a rite of passage, as he's often said. That it's forbidden. That glasses do not break it on purpose. That when we walk into restaurants or into our homes, we are always careful to move the glasses that are on the edge of the table. Our world requires us to make sure that the glasses do not fall on the floor.

However, I kept thinking, when broken by accident, we see that it was not so serious. The waiter says "don't worry about it", and I've never seen a broken glass be billed on a restaurant tab. Breaking glasses is a part of life and do not cause any harm to us, the restaurant, or the next person to sit at that table.

I took a bump on the table. The glass shook, but did not fall.

"Be careful!" he said instinctively.

"Break the glass," I insisted.

Break the glass, I thought to myself, because it is a symbolic gesture. Try to understand that within myself, things were breaking of much more importance than a glass, and I'm happy for that. Look to your own inner struggles and break this glass.

Our parents taught us to be careful with glasses and with our bodies. They taught us that the passions of childhood are impossible; we should not remove men from the priesthood; that people do not perform miracles and that no one goes on a journey without knowing where he wants to go.

Break this cup, please, I thought to myself, and release of all these damn misconceptions, the habit you have of only doing that which everyone agrees with.

"Break this glass," I say again.

He fixed his eyes on mine. Then, slowly, he slid his hand over the table, to touch the glass. In a quick movement, he pushed it to the ground.

The sound of broken glass caught everyone's attention. Instead of covering up the broken glass or apologizing, he looked at me and smiled. I smiled back.

"Don't worry about it!" yelled the waiter from across the restaurant.

But he did not listen. He had already risen from his seat, grabbed me by the hair and kissed me.

The few people who were at the bar must have looked and thought they were seeing just a kiss. They did not know at that moment, that kiss was the summary of my life, of his life, the life of any person who hopes, dreams and seeks his way under the sun.

COACHING NOTES

"From Conformity to Mobility" - Extracted from Timothy Gallwey's Inner Game of Work.

The pursuit of working free is not the pursuit of freedom from responsibility or from demands of bosses, companies, or customers. It is about choosing to work in a way that is truly responsible to yourself - a way that is in sync with your own choices, values and concerns.

There is an ancient tension between the living "fire" within an individual and the "focus" forced on him by the society in which he lives. Conformity is the word I use when the individual gives priority to the external form over the internal fire. Finding satisfaction at work becomes increasingly improbable as an individual or culture allows conformity to quench our inherent fire.

Conformity can be attractive and has its own compensations. It offers a safety based on the appearance of being,

doing and thinking like others. It offers convenient ways to blend in socially. In superficial matters, conformity may cause no harm. But when one bases life decisions on external voices at the expense of listening to one's inner self, something of the greatest value can be lost.

Many who know the cost of conformity rebel against it to protect their integrity as individuals. But rebelling against something has never provided the kind of freedom that satisfies. For that one must learn to listen to the promptings of one's deepest and most authentic self.

The conflict between the massive forces of society and the inherent need of the individual hardly seems to be a fair contest. Society sets norms and these norms are followed without thinking whether they are in our best interests. Those who can't or won't follow these norms are made to believe that they are wrong. They are treated as failures, in need of correction. Those who follow the norms and succeed become our heroes and model setters. There's so much external pressure and such a small voice within. Outside seems so big and inside seems so small. But inside has one big advantage - it is always there. Another advantage is that it is biased towards enjoyment. We like feeling good. Having DNA on your side is no small advantage in this contest between fire and form. But it is still a formidable contest and it takes considerable courage as well as wisdom to win.

Redefining work as performance, learning and enjoyment is a giant step towards working free. The next step is to attempt to understand why conformity is so attractive to us and how it affects our ability to work free. The word I find most helpful in discussing this concept is mobility. It connotes not a specific destination but the ability to move in any desired direction without self-constraint.

Mobility. The capability to move or be moved. Applied to us, it means the ability to move or adapt change or be changed. It also means the ability to reach one's objectives in a fulfilling manner- to reach goals at the right time and in a way we feel good about. Therefore, mobility is not only change but fulfillment and harmony with one's progress.

If you wish to move away from conformity, mail us at programs@intradconsult.com to attend our Inner Coach workshops. Further details are also available at www.isecindia.in

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