



## *The Journey Ahead*

### *Decisive Leaders Don't Ruminates*

It has been the customary standard that employees moved upward in their careers, especially from fulfilling a role of an 'acting' manager or director. With the influence of mobile communications, differences in workforce generations; and, flattened organizations, these elements have changed that traditional pattern. Promotions that would have resulted from a *provisional run* in an acting capacity are now scrutinized for levels of leader competence, goal concentration, and constructive outcomes.

Such was the case for one of our latest clients in a position of 'Acting Director' in community relations for a large healthcare organization. She had been in the position for six months and was certain she would be fully promoted into the assignment at the close of the period. Unfortunately, she was told it was awarded to another individual. The exact feedback was that she had the correct vision of the company in place but had the habit of ruminating over critical decisions. The executive staff viewed this practice as ruining the initiative and positive outcomes of others working for her; and, other departmental teams she had to work with.

What is rumination? Rumination is a compulsive focused attention on the symptoms of one individual's distress, and on probable causes, as opposed to solutions. Rumination is related to worry except rumination focuses repeatedly on reliving negative feelings and experiences from the past. If 'this' happened before it will happen again. Eventually, excessive worry usually overcomes the potential for productive thought and innovative solutions.

How can you avoid rumination in situations like this? Use any or all of the following recommendations:

- Before you begin the problem-solving process, concentrate your vitality and time on what you can control. Do not let yourself relive old disappointments of a similar nature, especially avoid personal experiences. Assessments like this will trap you into how unjust the world can be. Instead, begin listing everything that is outside your direct control such as, the stock market numbers or office politics. Along with those elements you do not control, list all resources that are available in solution brainstorming. And, don't discount others you may not have used before such as, the mail room staff or the accountants in the finance department.
- Let moods of disappointment or resignation fully dissipate before you examine the facts surrounding an unanticipated challenge. Decisions are influenced by moods. No matter where we are and no matter what we are doing, we humans are *persistently* in a mood. Before you evaluate the data, the time spent, or how the competition won over you, concentrate on putting yourself in a self-confident or positive mood. This can be done alone or with the team members that went through the process with you. One exercise is to create a 'failure wall'. Hang a blank banner on a wall, provide markers or acrylic paints and ask the team to write observations, known mistakes, or inspirational quotes



that will help empty out the emotionalism that all may be holding. There should be no fear of reprisals, just a release mechanism to *release* pent up feelings.

- If this is not a 'new' problem for the company, reassess what software or hardware tools, delivery vehicles, or advisors were not correct for the project at that time. Discard what was not useful. Even giants such as, Apple and Coke learned valuable lessons about their products in the last two years. According to Paul J. H. Schoemaker, CEO of Decision Strategies International Inc., "People may fear failure, but they fear the consequences of it even more. The performance culture really is in deep conflict with the learning culture. It's an unusual leader who can balance these." Be that leader.
- If this issue or problem is genuinely new, then gather the experts. Oftentimes, it is enlightening to have someone that is successful, to help you examine what can go askew; and, what can be done in another way. Having an expert give you advice will assist you to identify things that you may not have realized in the midst of the fury. Remember that replication of a previously engineered product or service is not innovative, only copycat behavior. Bringing in outsiders who are unattached to a project's past, or your individual aspirations, can help you shape the pending strategy for success. Don't let your ego stop you from adjusting your personal theories when new facts are found. Don't let pride stop you from attaining future success.
- Decisive leaders never leave the elements of success as a mystery for others to speculate about. These leaders clearly explain their expectations for each task, the owner of that task and the timeline allowed. Then everyone understands why the project is in progress, what is expected of them, what the intended outcome should be, and when to deliver their part of it.

When you catch yourself ruminating over a problem, *ask* yourself:

- What do the stakeholders and top leadership expect from you, and your team? If you have worked with these people before, what patterns have you observed in their work behavior? And, are they useful or could their techniques use some higher standards?
- Have you communicated effectively with all others in determining new solutions to the conundrum you face now? Have you listened carefully to others and given constructive feedback to them so that they may deliver their best?
- If you keep reliving the same experience about a past job, are you tied up in the pattern of self-blame, unable to admit you didn't have the best skills for that job then, but you do now? How can you make a commitment to yourself for continued self-development, online classes or enlisting a mentor?

*"Visionary people face the same problems everyone else faces; but rather than get paralyzed by their problems, visionaries immediately commit themselves to finding a solution."*

*Bill Hybels*