



WISDOM WITHOUT WAITING

*A Common-Sense Guide To Success
In Life And Work.*

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Wisdom Without Waiting—A Common Sense Guide to Success in Life and Work

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Dedication:

This first section is dedicated to my wife Maureen, who has constantly reminded me for over thirty years that “common sense” is very important, in business and in life.

Acknowledgements:

Grateful acknowledgment is made to all the sources cited in the text. Too many people to list here (even if I had such a comprehensive list) contributed in one way or another to the various parts of this book as it came together over a period of ten plus years. They know who they are, and to them all I am very grateful.

There are few detailed annotations, but the sources of all material and quotations are cited when they are used.

Parts of the material in Part Two were previously published as my columns in IndustryWeek, on the American Management Associations web site mworld.org, by Management Centre Europe or by Executive Excellence, and in an assortment of other printed material sources. All of this material is ©John Mariotti.

Deming's 14 Points was derived from a modified secondary reference and not his book. Covey's Seven Habits were drawn from his book, but modified, with explanations added.

Murphy's Laws were derived from commercially available posters and related sources.

Part One

Wisdom

Is

Mostly

Condensed Experience

Introduction

A Few Thoughts

Experience:

- **The worst thing about experience is that you have to live through things to get it.**
- **The best thing about experience is that once you've got it, no one can take it away from you.**

We all need it and we all get it (sooner or later, one way or another). Gaining experience takes time, and while it can sometimes be accelerated, the errors that go with trying to get on the "fast-track" can be painful — and sometimes terminal. (At least to a career, that is.) Experience is really nothing more than learning through situations encountered in the course of life. If one can arrange or encounter enough different situations, survive the errors that arise from trial and error solutions, and learn from them, experience will have been gained!

Unfortunately, the old cliché, "you learn from experience" often isn't true. As Peter Senge points out in his book, *The Fifth Discipline*, the cause and effect are frequently (too) far separated in time and circumstances. When this occurs, we cannot relate the cause to the effect, and we do not learn from experience. We may actually repeat our mistakes! Real learning only happens when one takes time and effort for reflection.

In life, the way we gain experience and the experience we gain does not always apply to the problems we might face in our future job or career. To make matters worse, things change. This fact can make experience we have already gained less useful, possibly inappropriate, or sometimes downright wrong. This is why the comments later on say "Never Stop Learning!"

Many people fear changes or at the very least are anxious about change. They resist change and attempt to maintain the status quo. Truly effective, successful people seek and savor change. They enjoy it because they realize that with change comes opportunity.

The right kind of experience can not only make us more comfortable with change, but also teach us how to embrace it and capitalize on it. One of the negative reactions to the potential of change is worry. To worry about something is natural and yet wasteful. In order to see the waste in worry, take a sheet of paper and write all the things you are worried about right now.

Use circles or check marks to identify all those that will be resolved because you worried about them. None? That's the "correct answer." No problems ever get resolved by worry (they can be made worse!). Only considered thought, planning, action, and a positive attitude will resolve problems.

Education:

- **The worst thing about education is that most of it is provided by educators.**
- **The best thing about education is that you are never too old to get more of it, or too young to benefit from it.**



ne way to think of education, especially the further one goes in school, is as an "accelerated condensed experience." (My educator friends tell me this is only one of two forms of education, the other being the scientific model, but this one fits my purpose, so I'll plow ahead with it, asking their forgiveness for the technical "liberty" I'm taking.) In education we learn from the concentrated accumulated experience of others recorded in textbooks and teachings that we study. The various situations are, in effect, created and solved for us without the risk of trial and error on our part, and at an accelerated pace as well. Often, the cases studied allow us to learn from the trial and error experience of others.

One of the most common criticisms of educators comes from their own lack of "first-hand" experience. Like any story, experience that is passed on repeatedly by word of mouth loses something in the process. Educators who work hard at keeping their experience base of knowledge fresh are usually among the best teachers.

Often, the accumulated knowledge and condensed (first-hand) experience we've gained, combined with education that we've had, helps us develop that elusive thing called "common sense." But, not always. As I stated earlier, real learning occurs only after the mind has been opened to reflection. When we have gained experience and taken the time and effort to reflect on it — then we may learn from it.

Author Stephen R. Covey uses an interesting phrase to drive this point home, "I don't care how much you learn until I learn how much you care." If you want to really benefit from this book, open your mind, think and reflect on your own life experience. As my old college professor Harold Ratcliff said, "There is no expedient to which man will not go to avoid the real labor of thought." We often think that we should take action right away. We should, but the action we should take is to stop and think. The remainder of the book will describe some of the most effective ways to think about what the action we should take.

What I hope to do in this book is exactly what I just described — to speed up the process of gaining common sense through "condensing experience" with special attention to describing habits and approaches that will be useful in your life and career. The goal of this book is to help you gain the experience to use those "common sense" habits to be successful in your life.

This book combines the elements of education with those of experience to give some very useful ways to diagnose and solve problems that are common to a wide variety of situations. Something to remember is that the old "bromides" are not so bad; the clichés are not always "tired." In fact, they are both usually based on time proven facts! Most of the concepts outlined in this book have been tested in real situations and proven successful.

Habits:

- **The worst thing about habits is that you can drop them and they don't break, they just bounce back.**
- **The best thing about habits is that you can do a lot of good stuff without a lot of thought (which is hard work!).**

Habits are very powerful. They influence our lives in many ways — eating, sleeping, talking, personal mannerisms, and on and on. Our thought processes even follow habits in many cases. If something happens, learned habits cause us to respond in predictable ways. For example: "Thank you." "You're welcome." "How are you doing?" "Fine, how are you?" These familiar phrases and responses are just elementary examples of how we habitually react in certain ways to certain things. These habits become an automatic part of how we operate. They often become almost subconscious. Doing things by habit allows them to happen very quickly, they seem nearly effortless in response to certain stimuli.

Good habits can be learned, bad ones can be unlearned, and others that have been found to be effective can be adapted for our use, advantage, and convenience. CE will tell you about a whole range of habits that can be learned or adapted to help you in your career. Learn the right habits, the right ways of thinking about things and you can arrive quickly at solutions to problems, analyses of difficult situations, and ways of dealing with people that have been proven effective. Best of all, once these have become habits, they will happen very quickly and with much less effort.

Since I started writing this book, years ago, Stephen R. Covey has written his excellent book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. In his book, he describes a particular set of worthwhile habits to learn and cultivate. These habits are listed below, and I encourage you to read Covey's book to understand them completely.

"The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People."

© Dr. Stephen R. Covey

1. Be Proactive. Don't be a victim, or be reactive. Take responsibility for what happens in your life.
2. Begin with the end in mind. If you don't know where you want to go, how can you possibly get there?
3. Put first things first. There are many roles and important parts of our lives. Be sure to consider the important priorities and not let whatever comes up take priority.
4. Think win-win. Always strive for a win-win in any relationship. Even if it is not immediately achievable, the result will be more satisfying than win-lose.
5. Seek to understand, then be understood. Don't impose your own autobiographical interpretation on others. Instead, really empathize and listen.
6. Synergize. Always try to make the result greater than the sum of the parts. Look for abundance, not scarcity. Make the pie bigger, then share it.
7. Sharpen the saw. It is imperative that you keep yourself mentally and physically in shape.

Covey's habits have become so widely read, that some may question reiterating them here. My reasons are simple. They make a lot of sense. This book is designed to be "Condensed Experience" so it is logical to include those topics that others have amply covered but are an important part of learning and experience.

Because I want to keep this book short and easy to read quickly, I have limited the number of habits that I have added and described. In over 30 years of experience, many habits accumulate—some good, and some not so good. Hopefully the ones in here are the best of the good ones.

Common Sense:

- **The worst thing about common sense is that it isn't very common—in most folks anyway.**
- **The best thing about common sense is that a little of it will get you a long way.**

Why are some people successful when others aren't? What do many experienced managers, professionals, college grads, or new employees in any job have in common? They all need to get down to the basics, the essentials, the critical issues and facts of their situation as quickly as possible. Only after they have done this can they begin to "do the job," and really find the solution that will make them successful. All too often, they haven't had any chance to prepare for this.

Nowhere along the way, to this point of their life did they gain the necessary experience, have the appropriate education, find that personal mentor or develop the "common sense" to handle this situation. Former executive and University of Dayton Professor Robert Bidwell describes with an entertaining style this lack of training and preparation for first time managers and supervisors in his book, *Skills for Managerial Excellence*.

Make no mistake; nothing in here will solve problems "magically." It won't even guarantee success! Only hard work, perseverance and knowledge of the area involved will really do that. What this book will do is show you where and how to look for the problems and solutions, and what to expect once you have found them.

In many fields, the principles are similar to those in the art of painting. The truly talented artist doesn't rely nearly as much on the ability to apply the paint as on the ability to see the finer details of the subject of the painting. Being able to see the light and shadows, the colors and textures, and even some intangible characteristic is the key to a fine painting.

Good artists are talented at composing the artwork, and arranging the major elements of it. They may be better at composing the total work of art than they are at filling in the details. Yet others excel at the detail work and lack good overall composition. In these cases the art is often good but not great. Great art results when the "big picture" represented by the choice of subject matter and its composition is balanced with fine detail work. So it is in life and in business.

Seeing things more clearly will help you make the best use of your time, both in looking for and acting on problems and their solutions. Jack Prendergast, a Value Analysis consultant I used over twenty years ago once told me, "There are only two steps to solving any problem: first, define the problem; second, solve the problem — in that order."

Too often we try to do the second before we have done the first! CE will also provide you a number of "road maps" to proven successful ways to find the problem, and some ideas on where to look for solutions. It will offer you thoughts on ways of operating, thinking, behaving, and dealing with people. Most of all, it will give you the opportunity to learn and build new habits using CE concepts. The first step in learning habits is to understand them. Next is to try using them (and adjust if they don't "work" for you.) Once you have gained "ownership" of these habits, once they have become yours, then you can take advantage of the speed and ease with which seemingly difficult things become much less difficult.

THE TEN KEYS OF CONDENSED EXPERIENCE (CE)

Beware of things that seem simple. They usually aren't. It is the truly complex and wonderful things that seem simple. Nature is the best example of this.

The key points I intend to cover are not really too numerous — I have chosen to list only ten in all. (I like using ten things to illustrate points. This way you can use the fingers of your hands to help recall them!) There may only be ten, BUT they are very significant. So significant in fact, that I will devote a (brief) chapter to each one. If you are busy like most people who read this book, you can look through this chapter and the conclusion now and the other chapters later. That's in keeping with the concept of the book, because just knowing the ten keys will be the first step toward developing them as habits. In this way, you can start succeeding more quickly!

1. **PEOPLE:** Nearly everything you do or accomplish depends on people. They are by far the most important resource, the most important factor, and the most important ingredient to understand in CE.

2. **CHARACTER, PERSONAL VALUES, INTEGRITY, HARD WORK (COMMITMENT):** These are the cornerstones of any successful person and of doing any job. Because of this, success demands and relies heavily on them. (It assumes that these factors are present, because without them, working on the others is a waste of time!) Some of the other KEYS are used intermittently, but these are constant, a foundation upon which everything else is built.

3. **MURPHY'S LAWS:** For those of you who aren't familiar with them — the most basic one is: If anything can go wrong, it will. The key to success is to realize this, and have a plan to fall back on when something does begin to go wrong! (Murphy's laws do not say that things have to go wrong or that if they do that they're destined to stay wrong!)

4. **PLAN, PLAN, PLAN:** Too many people think that a really dynamic, successful person is a man of action. They're right — but what too few realize is that the man of action who is truly successful plans before he takes that action. An old saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." I say an ounce of planning is worth a pound of action and a pound of planning is better still.

5. **ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS:** The key to a quick assessment of many situations is to ask the right questions, and hopefully start on the way to getting the right answers. But, how do I know the right questions, you ask? Here's how. Start with these simple ones: Who?, What?, Where?, When?, Why?, and How? (or How Much?). These six simple questions will get you enough of the facts that are readily available to help you zero in on more complicated questions. (A note of caution here, the "Why?" can sometimes hurt your questioning process because the answer to it may be embarrassing or awkward and this question must be asked carefully.) More on this topic later.

6. **WORK ON THE IMPORTANT THINGS:**

PARETO'S PRINCIPLE: This could also be stated: Work on the mountains not the molehills! In most situations the vast majority of the results (or the things that really matter), often as much as 80%, depend on or arise from a very limited number of the instances or events, as little as 20%. In other words, the old 80/20 rule. It's usually true and it saves wasting time on things that won't matter much to you, even if you do them well.

DRUCKER'S CONCEPTS: This is not a total review of the work of Peter Drucker, but rather calls out only a specific part of his theories — and an old one at that. In simplified form, it says: "There is surely nothing quite so useless as doing with great efficiency what should not be done at all." In other words, work on things that will make a difference. This quotation comes from one of the most useful articles on managing and business ever written. It was written in the Harvard Business Review in 1963, and it is as true today as the day it was written.

DEMING'S 14 POINTS: Dr. W. Edwards Deming traveled to post-war Japan and was instrumental in helping the Japanese work a modern industrial miracle. The Japanese progressed very rapidly from a country noted for its low quality goods to one noted for the high quality of its products. While many think Deming's 14 points are rules about quality, they are much more than that. That makes them worthy for inclusion in CE.

7. **THE MAGIC OF A MATRIX:** (or how to find the mountains among the molehills.) This technical sounding approach organizes data into a form that transforms it into useful information. Matrices are applicable to most situations, disciplines and needs. Once learned, this approach can be enhanced with today's computer and software technology to become a frequent starting point to solving most quantitative problems. It can also expose some of the harder to quantify issues for further work.

8. **NEGOTIATE:** If you don't ask, you won't get! The more you expect and ask for, the more you'll get — at least within limits. We all negotiate for something every day of our life. Learn how to negotiate well and it will help you in everything you do. Try to develop win-win solutions and negotiate about matters of fact whenever you can.

9. **COMMUNICATE:** Communication skills are essential—both “telling” and listening. Being able to communicate in writing and speaking are simply necessary to convey your thoughts and ideas. No amount of good thought can be useful if it is not ably communicated. The skill of being a good, empathic listener is an equally powerful and useful one. Few people really become good at it.

10. **IT HAS TO BE FUN!** Whatever you do for a living, whatever career you choose, if it isn't fun, you will soon tire of it, begin to dislike it, lose interest in it, etc. When you do, from that time on, you'll begin doing it poorly. Most people spend between 1/3 and 1/2 of their waking life at their job, maybe more. What a terrible "sentence" it would be to spend that much of life doing something that was unpleasant, undesirable and not fun. Covey has also written eloquently on this topic in his book First Things First.

These are the ten keys to success. There are probably many more, but I'll pick up some of those along the way in inserts and special sections.

As I said at the start of this chapter, they will be covered in more detail, each in their own individual chapters that follow. There is really an eleventh one, as well. It is one, which will also have a brief chapter devoted to it, because it's something that everyone who has a career must think about, "Do you live to work? — Or work to live?" There is no right answer to either of these, the only right answer is the one that is really, honestly truthful for you. It's critically important that you decide which, because it will determine how you set priorities for the rest of your life.

In conclusion, I hope you see by now that success is not exactly magic; it just seems like it at times. Nothing in here will replace hard work! Even hard work will not replace real knowledge or training or experience either! There is something all of this knowledge will do. It will save you time and inconvenience of having to learn the "KEYS" by the often-painful experience of trial and error. If it just does that, I'll be satisfied that writing this book was worthwhile. I hope you will too. Remember, it's just "common sense?" and “common sense isn't very common at all”.

Wisdom
On
What's
Important

The Death of Ethics

We must bring "doing the right thing" back to life!

I am reluctant to read the headlines in newspapers, feature articles in popular magazines or the TV these days. What has happened to our sense of shame in this country as we approach the new millennia? Is there no such thing as a person being responsible for his/her actions any more? Must everyone try to wriggle through some inane technicality to relieve their guilt, or blame their actions on someone else or some other group?

It seems few are immune for the plague that has caused the death of ethics. Our President and Vice President run for their proverbial moral lives from allegations so profuse and so clear that there must be something there. Our business leaders are deposed from actions not exactly per se illegal, but so onerous and immoral that it matters little. Indisputable sexual harassment permeates leading multinational companies and their executive suites.

Companies desperate to dance to the tune of Wall Street analysts magical flute ship goods that don't exist to locations that aren't there, just to "make the quarter." Authors send staffers to buy their books at the precisely right assortment of bookstores to vault it to the top of the best sellers' list and then charge healthy five digit fees for speaking about the contents. Basketball stars flaunt their deviant behavior, and prosper from it. Music and movie icons are now more notorious than notable, more awful than awesome. Labor leaders beat their breasts for the welfare and rights of their rank and file and then divert funds to assure their continued election to office.

It is enough to make a relatively normal, moderately flawed, fallible human being sick to their stomach! What kind of lessons, what kind of examples, what kind of roles models are we tolerating for our youth to see, to emulate and God forbid, to use as patterns for how to get ahead in the 21st century. I, for one, am glad my children are grown and exercising their own mature good judgment. I fear for our grandchildren.

I fear equally for the young, the impressionable, the stressed-out working youth of this country who must only conclude that this must be an acceptable way of getting ahead. We thought such mildly entertaining canards as "How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying" were a problem—think again. There is no humor in the escapades of our Presidents and Vice President—of the U. S. or of some corporations! There is even less humor—unless it is gallows humor, in the awesome, sweetheart pay deals bestowed by some boards of directors on the CEO who chose them in reward for less, often far less than awesome returns to their shareholders!

I must not condemn the innocent with the guilty. Many of our current leaders are honest, respectable people trying to succeed and lead their organizations in the right direction. Some of them reside in Washington, DC; some in our State houses; many in the headquarters of our corporations; others as civil servants, faithfully doing their jobs. But these are not newsworthy! Making a good, honestly earned profit, passing sound legislation, administering programs efficiently and well are meritorious but not noteworthy. Do something really despicable, and then you can become really famous, and probably profit handsomely from the book or movie rights if it is sensational enough!

It is time for things to change. Radical, minority (not just racial minorities either) special interest groups have seized the rights of the majority—rights protected by the constitution. When I hear jokes like "This is America—speak Spanish!" and when I hear about the ludicrous creation of so-called "ethnically-derived" languages (*Ebonics* was just one of these) to avoid learning proper grammar and appropriate use of the spoken and written language of the United States—English, it makes me wonder why the majority of us just sit back and shake our heads.

It is time for values and personal responsibility and ethics to become first priorities again! And it starts with you—and me—all of us. Actor Jim Carrey made what was certainly the best message movie of his career (not much of a contest after his first few) in the movie *Liar, Liar*. In this, Carrey's son wishes that his lawyer father would have to tell the truth for one whole day. A staggering day it is (thanks in part to Carrey's histrionics).

I fear few of us would fare much better than he did when it comes to the "white lies" to avoid hurting peoples feelings or disclosing facts better left unknown. But one message comes through loud and clear: "the truth shall set ye free" (but you'll suffer while it's happening!)

It is clear that workers can see through management who constantly and continuously lie, bend the truth freely and regularly fail to keep promises. Those kinds of leaders lose their followers—and fast—as they should. It is happening at some of America's most well-known and once admired companies! As the good people go, so do the sales, profits, and then the almighty stock price. Human values are coming back in style. Good role models will begin to get the recognition they deserve—that of the people who work with and around them.

How about joining the effort. I want to start a revolution of beliefs and behavior. For a start, maybe we should take a part of our new action plan from the old Boy Scout Law's 12 points: *A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent.* This has held up for about 90 years. Then add the golden rule: "*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*" Corny, sure. Ethical, you bet. This is a simple and easy to understand beginning for the behavior, which will eradicate the plague, that is causing the death of ethics! How about it—have you had enough? I have!

—**"It's not hard to do the right thing. It's hard to know the right thing to do. Once you know, it's hard not to do the right thing."** —Ben Kingsley in the movie *The Confession*

What Lessons Are We Teaching?

In the year 2000, as the U. S. Presidential Election ground past its 30th day without resolution a number of thoughts came to mind. The first, and by far most important is the question: "What are we teaching our youth and our employees by our examples?"

During a board meeting last year, we sat through a longer presentation from legal advisors and accountants than we spent deliberating the future of the company. Why? Because there were extensive new "rules" for recognizing revenue from the Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC) and Federal Accounting Standards Board (FASB).

These rules resulted from misleading reporting used to inflate dot-com companies' income, which in turn fueled their astronomical stock prices. Well, the stock prices have now crashed to earth like spent fireworks, leaving just the burnt out shells of what were glamorous new companies. The SEC and FASB really did not change the rules; they just clarified them so definitively that no one could claim that they misinterpreted them.

Then I reflected on what the recent election...and the past few years of misadventures in our nation's capital...taught us. We learned that President Clinton could get away with reprehensible behavior, blatant public lies and perjury—and still keep his job. We have learned that 250+ of our elected officials could not abandon politically self-serving interests to punish a miscreant that would be serving jail time in any other walk of life. I'm not sure who the greater criminal is—the President who indisputably committed the crimes—or those in Congress who failed to mete out the appropriate punishment.

If that had happened, Al Gore would have been an incumbent President going into the election! But we also learned from him that if there is “no governing legal authority”; we can do whatever we can get away with. It doesn’t matter if we know it’s wrong. The lesson—as long as we can bend the rules, shade the truth, or find a technicality to use as rationalization, it’s OK. Is that what we want to be teaching?

We are teaching that the law means only one thing—income for lawyers and hours of work for TV’s “talking heads”. The rules for counting revenue or counting votes don’t matter, as long as we “count every vote”—well, that’s not quite it either. We need to “count a few *extra* dollars of income or “count every *extra* vote in certain places, and in certain ways” even if the rest of the country (or even that state) did not use that rule. (Then we need to stir up those who did not realize they were wronged, so we can show the social outrage and unrest on our TV news!)

In our Super Bowl of elections, with enough lawyers (and a few cooperative jurists) maybe we can move the goal line (just a few inches) if our final touchdown drive falls short. (I’ll bet the Tennessee Titans wish they had sued the NFL last year to re-measure the Super Bowl field. Who knows, the touchdown drive that ended a foot short might have counted—if the field was not measured exactly at 100 yards.)

Never mind that the outcome of all the other games played on similarly inexact fields still stood—and that these outcomes determined which teams played in the Super Bowl. Next, maybe we should measure the height of the baskets in the NBA Championship game, and replay any disputed games with our newly determined “accurate” basket height. Sound preposterous? Sure! But it is just what was going on in Florida, and in a different way in distorted earnings reports.

The lessons we are teaching anyone old enough to understand are that rules are made to be broken—or at least bent! Laws are not made to be followed—just debated. Rules and regulations are only as good as the legal team we can get to argue them. And, sorry Yogi Berra, *“it ain’t over—even after it’s over—if you don’t like the way it came out!”*

Unless we learn from these debacles, our country and our culture will be irreparably harmed by the events of the past few years, and especially the past 4 weeks. Unless someone sets the record straight (as the majority of the Supreme Court attempted to do) all the regulatory bodies in the world cannot write regulations for people who are willing to bend the rules beyond the breaking point to win.

When our public leaders show us the way they do it—why shouldn’t we? (But officer, I didn’t realize that the STOP sign meant me. After all, it wasn’t perfectly square to the road and I thought it might be for some other road!)

I used to be proud to be an American. This past winter, I was ashamed...and alarmed. You should be too, no matter who “won” the election—we all “lost” because of what we are teaching our youth and our employees—that this kind of behavior is OK!

—“The behavior rewarded is the behavior repeated.” —from a story about the fisherman, the snake and the frogs.

Suddenly Last Summer—A Perspective on Diversity and Life

People are where it all begins and ends

I had an interesting five days one summer a few years ago, and I want to share some of the thoughts these days brought to mind. I grew up in a very small mid-western town where I learned, above all else that people are "just people." I hadn't even thought much about wealth, status, or such things for a lot of my early years. I guess the professionals and business owners did have slightly larger homes, but few people said much about it.

People have often asked me about the key to leadership success and one of the first words that usually comes out of my mouth is "caring," usually followed rather quickly by words like "character, values, integrity, and doing good!" Over the years of my career I have found the old phrase "what goes around comes around" to be especially true when it involves leading people or being part of a real team, in a successful (or even a not so successful) setting. There are times that success is based on more than "just people," but they are relatively few. Competency is required, no doubt about that. Courage and persistence and hard work are necessary too. Perhaps most of all, the appreciation of the richness of the diversity and talents of people is what makes the whole picture complete.

This summer day, as I walked the streets of my old hometown with my wife of 32 years, the beauty surrounding me moved me. On a weekday morning, the streets were quiet and peaceful. The sun shimmered with a special clarity and brightness. The old shade trees cast big, cool shadows as a light breeze rustled their leaves. A few people washed windows or tended their gardens. A dog barked and the faint sound of hammers signaled some repair work being done. The yellow of the day lilies and the green of the grass were so bright they could have come from an impressionist painting. Nearly everyone who drove by waved. This is a place where people cared about people; a place where they knew your name and your face; a place with a slower, warmer, friendlier life and pace. In this place, I learned that people are above all else, regardless of their station in life, just people.

The next day, I visited a company where I had worked for 12 years—but that was seventeen years ago! I had not been back for over ten years, but there were still about 15-20 people working there who I knew well. The reception they gave me was terrific. I found I immediately recalled names of people I had not seen for 10-15 years, and I realized how much people meant to my career and life. Two specific events stick in my mind. One was the parting handshake and after a brief hesitation, a warm hug from a man with 41 years service (whose father before him had worked for this company over 45 years!). This was a man I found working in the service department, who has now been a management stalwart in production planning for over 20 years. What an exceptional treasure.

The second event was a comment by another close friend whose job the past few years might best be called "human *relations*." While discussing some of the managerial errors of the past, he said emphatically, "*It's pretty simple. Tell the people what's going on, make sure they understand what needs to be done, and then help make sure it's getting done. But never, ever lie to them!*" So much for high-minded theories and fancy terms. Common sense, honesty, and decency with people can accomplish a lot.

My next stop that week was for my mother-in-law's 80th birthday party. Seeing all the family together was a special treat. As I photographed the four generations of women in my life—mother-in-law, wife, daughter, and granddaughter—I realized how precious this cycle of life was, and how rich the diversity around me was. I never really considered the enormous range of talents and work lives of my own family represented there: a meat cutter, a maintenance supervisor, an art gallery owner, a computer system supervisor, a tow-truck operator, a police officer, a pipe-fitter, a bank officer, a teacher, an office worker, a retail operations manager, a sales manager, a transportation consultant, a retired pharmacist, and on and on.

One common theme—all part of my family, all loved ones with spouses, children, parents, aunts and uncles, cousins. When the "human resource" professionals speak about diversity, it somehow comes out sounding like something in a bottle or out of a textbook. It isn't. It is the very fabric of life and the richness of business itself.

The last event of the five days was a sad one. I came home to a message from the wife of a former colleague and friend that he was dying of cancer and didn't have long—so if I wanted to speak to him, I should call soon. (I did, and had a nice conversation—he died five days later.) It was then that reality hit me.

We worry about a lot of things in business and in life: promotions and demotions, projects and deadlines, late airplanes and early meetings. We espouse fancy theories and speak in high-sounding phrases. When it comes to the bottom line, I believe the life of business and the business of life are pretty much alike. Care deeply. Do good. Help people. You never know when your time is up. Enjoy the sunshine and flowers on a summer day. Give somebody you love a hug. Live, love and leave a legacy. And be sure to keep things in perspective. Most of all appreciate the richness and diversity of the world and the people around you—they are what success in life (and business) is all about. I am not sure of many things—but of this I am certain!

I hope you are richer for having read this. Good luck and God Bless.

—"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself." --Ralph Waldo Emerson