

**With the passage of time we become so familiar with ourselves and our surroundings that nothing amazes us any more. Yet, if we pause to observe life carefully, we will discover miracles in everything we see and experience.**

On re-visiting an earlier article, I came to the realization that we need to press the 'refresh' button frequently to stay alive to the opportunities and threats around us.

It is encouraging to see that the corporate world in Pakistan has changed for the better during the past decade. Appreciation and practice of professionalism and teamwork is on the rise. Many companies now have vision and values. Mission is on the corporate agenda. Learning and growing is slowly, but surely, becoming a norm. This is evidenced by the growing number of seminars, workshops and conferences being held in hotels throughout the country. Local companies have joined the multinationals in big numbers in hosting learning events and also in sponsoring creative educational initiatives. However, this is only the beginning and much has yet to be done.

Some day people will be queuing up bookstores, libraries and surfing the net in large numbers for knowledge, to furnish their minds and broaden their vision. I look forward to the day when students in schools, colleges and universities will be bubbling with curiosity and actively engage in wide-ranging discussions and debates. I firmly believe that when hunger and thirst for real learning is ignited, we will witness a revolutionary change fuelled by the power of knowledge and love.

As a trainer and teacher, I strive to inspire and motivate managers and workers alike. A question I often ask in my learning programs is: "What do birds do that is different from us humans?" Participants usually reply, "They fly!" Think about it. How do the birds really fly? They merely flap their wings and make the effort. The fact is birds flap their wings while nature gives them flight. Clip a few feathers from the wings of a pigeon and it will lose its freedom to fly. Why? Because we interfered with the laws of aerodynamics. Our primary responsibility is to learn about the laws of nature and gain practical insights from them. Insights that will help us lead healthy lives and manage our affairs more effectively. Nature is our ultimate teacher.

I have come across many managers, including those in senior positions, behaving as though their wings were clipped. Huffing and puffing and getting no-where - struggling, yet not able to

make decisions.

Our flight comes from our mind. When we use imagination to invent the future, we acquire miraculous powers. Imagination helps us attain great heights in life. Charles Handy says, “The great excitement of the future is that we can shape it.” He goes on to say, “We are living in very confused times, because many of the things that gave structure to our lives are disappearing. Institutions that we relied on, particularly the work organizations are no longer so sure or so certain. To give ourselves some sense of cohesion, we have to work out what the future is going to be like.”

Why do people find themselves defenseless in the face of uncertainty? There are several possible reasons. Some have resigned themselves to their present condition, believing that this is just the way they were destined to live. Others are frustrated with past setbacks and blame bad luck for their misfortunes, finally quitting. Many are just not aware of the immense potential within them. They merely exist in blissful ignorance. They neither seek to discover nor are they really interested to see beyond their nose. Such people spend their time devoid of purpose, living from day to day. Another category are busy as spectators, merely commenting on matters about which they seemingly can do nothing. In general, such people see themselves as helpless victims, surrendering to circumstance or chance.

On the other hand, we see examples of people who are in love with life. They are turned on by the possibilities that life offers, and wake up each morning with a burning desire to make things happen. They make each day count and enjoy life to the full. Sarmad Tariq, a young quadriplegic who completed a Khyber to Karachi (K2K) solo drive recently, is one such example that comes to mind. He leads a full life – a life of responsibility and adventure. Can you imagine a man who is paralyzed from the neck down, with numerous health complications, actually being happy and yearning to excel in every moment? Sarmad’s life is an inspiration for millions of able bodied people. He describes himself as ‘physically challenged’ and believes that so long as one has the ability to think, one is able to achieve anything he/she desires. Look out for his inspiring life story in one of the future issues of Blue Chip.

What type of a manager are you? A drifter? Blaming all and sundry for non-achievement of your goals? Or are you a leader and visionary? Someone who seeks to take on greater responsibility for results and welcomes challenges?

Confront reality. Self deception will only make matters worse in the long run. If you feel your

wings are clipped and you find yourself in a rut, ask yourself why and how you got this way. For meaningful answers, you need to look at your past. Go back to recollections of your earliest childhood. Imagine that you are rewinding your video tape. What can you see, feel and hear? Perhaps you hear your parents, teachers or relatives saying: "You can't do this," "This was stupid of you," "You will never learn," "These lofty dreams are not for ordinary mortals like you," "See! I knew you would mess this up!" You may also hear some of them saying: "You are very intelligent," "You are destined to do great things," "Oh, I love your ambitious nature," "Don't worry, mistakes do happen – learn from them and never fear failure." These are a few examples of how our environment has influenced us during our formative years.

Most parents, relatives, friends and teachers are well meaning. But they do not know, that in their desire to help, they sometimes inadvertently clip the wings' of their loved ones. Our belief system is shaped in our childhood. Our beliefs turn into our very own realities – the ones we live and experience daily.

Examine your beliefs closely. Our beliefs serve as our wings. Disempowering beliefs are like having our 'wings clipped.' Look at your relationships at work, at home and in society. See the problems you face. Analyze them. It should not surprise you to find that what you believe about life, people and problems, manifests in everything that you experience. I have yet to come across a person whose beliefs do not match the reality he/she uniquely experiences and lives!

To me success means having health, true respect and happiness, no matter what your vocation. The reward of success is peace of mind, which comes from a sense of intellectual freedom. Success is a never ending journey. For successful people goals only serve as milestones.

Successful people care about themselves and their relationships. They make their own luck. They love problems and see themselves as problem solvers. They search for bigger problems and challenges to overcome. They use environmental resistance as an aid to fly even higher. Study the life and beliefs of a few successful people closely. You will find that their beliefs about life are similar to those of other successful people. They all believe that life has its ups and downs. They believe that laws of nature work for them when they recognize, respect and use them for their advantage. They take risks and are willing to lose all they have in order to achieve higher goals. Successful people live by principles. They value relationships. They make it their business to understand human needs and strive to satisfy them. Successful people seek to influence and at the same time are open to influence of others. They believe in: "what you give is what you get." They are not impatient for the rewards of their efforts. They are driven by big, daring and at times seemingly crazy goals! They love life and seek to enjoy every moment of it.

Such people seek and find the company of other successful people. Birds of a feather flock together. You will never see crows in the company of eagles!

The best way to learn of your present beliefs is to look at the company you keep – one which gives you most comfort - in other words - your natural surroundings. If you feel that your companions are successful in terms you define - great! If not, make a change. Change your thinking and seek out people in your organization and community who are on the path you desire. As Stephen Covey puts it, “Become an island of excellence in a sea of mediocrity.” This will be painful at first. Continue to be respectful and tolerant towards others. Your immediate family, however, deserves your greater commitment, love and understanding. They may at first not understand when they experience the change in you. If this happens, take it as a positive sign. This is proof that you are improving.

Change can be a painful process. Face it and stay committed to the end. The resulting freedom and peace of mind is going to be your ultimate reward. However, you need more than mere slogans and quotes. To achieve real change in yourself and in your organization, you must first become aware of the cost of not changing. Then have a clear vision of the desired state, where the visible benefit is greater than the cost of not changing. Devise a clear strategy of how you aim to get there. Your core values will determine how you go about accomplishing your dreams.

In corporations, values practiced, determine the way they gather information, the way they reward people, the way they promote people, and the way they make people at the top accountable. A 360° review facilitates this. Once a year, every person, every team, every department and every division should be held accountable to the agreed values in the presence of all stakeholders. People unable to adapt their style of behavior either shape up or get ‘shipped out’! Holding people accountable consistently facilitates positive changes in behavior shaped by agreed values and enables fundamental transformation of individuals, of relationships and of organizations. Pakistan Tobacco Company is a shining example of transformation. The company had been making losses for seven years, until in 1999, Gottfried Thoma took the reigns, and achieved a successful turnaround in less than a year, and that too, with the same old team. He set a new direction and truly empowered people.

When will you attempt to fly even higher? How about now? Do what you have always wanted to do. First dream it. Change your beliefs and you will have a healthy set of wings. See yourself in your minds eye becoming successful, enjoying the fruits of your labor.

By nurturing a goal in your head, you would have sown the seed of success in your mind. Once this is done, let it grow in time. Next step is to make plans and commit to putting them into practice. Flap your wings furiously and let Mother Nature help you fly!

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