



talking about...

September 2008

... designing better relationships for better outcomes

What's Important to You

"There is no such thing in anyone's life as an unimportant day."

... Alexander Woollcott (1887 - 1943) US novelist, critic, actor

Here is a simple question for you - how do people know what is important to you? This may seem like an easy question to answer but think about it for a moment and then read on.

We would like to frame the question of what is important to you in the context of leadership, which involves engaging others in taking action to achieve certain goals. For those of you who are familiar with our work and the ontological approach, we look at the human condition and our way of observing through three mutually dependent domains - language, emotion and body. So let us look at this question in respect to each of these.

Let us begin with language. The obvious approach here is to tell people what is important to us. In order to do this, we obviously have to have a story about just what is important to us and then share that story with others. If we want to consistently engage others about what is important for us, we have to be clear just what is important to us. In other words, we have to spend time reflecting on our concerns and identify the ones that matter most. We also have to understand the meaning that we want others to take from what we are saying to them and to do this we have to understand and, if necessary, create the context that can best aid that understanding.

From an emotional perspective, we can tell what is important to others by the way they react emotionally to something. The bigger the response, the more likely we are to think that something is important. These responses can cover the whole gamut of human emotions from sadness through to joy. When someone tends to have minimal emotional response to an issue, this can be interpreted by others that this is not particularly important. It is useful to recognise here the idea of the appropriateness of an emotional response and that the emotional response does not have to define the ensuing actions. For example, anger can be an appropriate response to a situation where someone has intentionally done damage to you but may not be the most appropriate emotional space from which to take action to address that breakdown.

Finally, we have the idea that the actions we take will tell others what is important to us. If we spend time doing one thing rather than another, it can be interpreted that the first is more important than the second.

The key in having others know what is important to us lies in the use of these three domains in a coherent way. Now take the time to reflect on your answer at the start of this article and consider whether there are opportunities for you to be enhance the way in which others can see what is important to you.

"A human action becomes genuinely important when it springs from the soil of a clear-sighted awareness of the temporality and the ephemerality of everything human. It is only this awareness that can breathe any greatness into an action."

... Vaclav Havel (1936 -) Czech playwright, poet, politician

The Charlie Schultz Philosophy ...

Thanks to Richard for this one ...

Scroll through slowly and read carefully to receive and enjoy the full effect ...

The following is the philosophy of Charles Schultz, the creator of the 'Peanuts' comic strip. You don't have to actually answer the questions. Just read straight through, and you'll get the point. We have Australianised it a bit for the majority of our readers!

1. Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
2. Name the last five men's Wimbledon winners.
3. Name the last five winners of the Miss Universe pageant.
4. Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer Prize.
5. Name the last half dozen Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
6. Name the last decade's worth of Melbourne Cup winners.

How did you do?

Talking About Pty Ltd

PO Box 6652,
St Kilda Rd Central,
Victoria, 8008.

Ph: +613 9507 2464

info@talkingabout.com.au
www.talkingabout.com.au

The point is that none of us remember the headliners of yesterday.
These are no second-rate achievers.
They are the best in their fields.
But the applause dies.
Awards tarnish.
Achievements are forgotten.
Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners.

Here's another quiz. See how you do on this one:

1. List a few teachers who aided your journey through school.
2. Name three friends who have helped you through a difficult time.
3. Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile.
4. Think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated and special!!
5. Think of five people you enjoy spending time with.

Easier?

The lesson:

The people who make a difference in your life are not the ones with the most credentials... the most money... or the most awards.
They simply are the ones who care the most.

"If we glance at the most important revolutions in history, we see at once that the greatest number of these originated in the periodical revolutions of the human mind."

... Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767 - 1835) German scholar, philosopher, diplomat

ON YouTube

If you are looking for a little bit of inspiration at the moment, have a little look at this video, Rules For being Human, and you might just find some.

Go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2wopO178LQ&feature=related>

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ACN 112 307 892
info@talkingabout.com.au
Telephone: +61 3 9507 2464