



talking about...

September 2010

... designing better relationships for better outcomes

Gratitude

"Gratitude is the fairest blossom which springs from the soul."

... Ward Beecher (1813 - 1887) US clergyman & abolitionist

At our weekly Talking About meetings, we generally start with successes from the previous week as a means of establishing a sense of achievement in what we do in life. Recently, we decided that we would do something different and rather than speaking to our successes, we each spoke to what we were grateful in life. This turned out to be a very moving experience as we shared with each other what we truly appreciated about life. Not surprisingly, much of our gratitude related to the people close to us; those who make our life more meaningful. However, our thoughts also moved into aspects of the joy of our work and the opportunities we have in life. Indeed, having watched many documentaries on the history of the planet and human kind, I find it remarkable that I even exist for if just my parents had never met, I would not be. At that is the tip of the iceberg of my ancestry! So at a very basic level, I found myself grateful for my existence.

After we had that conversation, I reflected on the idea of gratitude in the workplace and wondered how often people spoke of what they were grateful for in life or in their work place. My initial thought was that such conversations would be a rarity. Given the nature of organisational life, it seems to me that most conversations are likely to serve either the desire for reporting or resolution of problems. One of the mantras of organisational life is to be constantly improving. This basic belief lies behind the focus on what is not working rather than what is. Think about the conversations you have at work and the nature of those conversations. How often do you think to appreciate your colleagues and friends, simply because they are there and they make your life that little bit better? How often do you tell them?

One of human beings' most basic concerns is our relevance to others. We like to think that what we do matters. Not just to us but to those in our communities. Yet if we are never told that others appreciate us, then how do we know that they do? So this month, we would like to invite to reflect on what and who you are grateful for in life. We also invite you to take this further and tell those who are important to you of your gratitude. If you do so, then value the experience as it is for you and how it appears for others and take that into your day.

Above all, be grateful for life.

"I am grateful that my horizons were not narrowed at the outset."

... Jessye Norman b.1945 US operatic and concert singer

Digging a Hole

A salesman stopped at a petrol station and, after filling the tank, he went into a nearby café and ordered a coffee. As he enjoyed his brew, he looked out the window and watched a couple of men working along the roadside. One man would dig a hole about a metre deep and then move on ten metres and dig the next one. A second man followed along behind the first and filled in the hole that the first man had dug. The two men continued this activity down the road and right past where man sat drinking his coffee.

As he watched them, the salesman got more and more agitated to the point where he exclaimed, "I can't stand this, what are they doing?!" Dashing out of the café, he ran down the street to where the men were standing and asked, "What are you doing? What is the point of digging holes and then just filling them in?"

"Well, since you are so interested, we work for the green program" said the first man. "

"But one of you is digging a hole and the other fills it up. How is that helping the environment?" asked the salesman.

"You don't understand, sir" said the second man. "Normally there's three of us - me, Jim and Bill. Jim digs the

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hole, Bill sticks in the tree and I put the soil back. Now just because Bill is sick, that doesn't mean that we have to stop work, now does it! "

"Grace has been defined as the outward expression of the inward harmony of the soul."

... William Hazlitt (1778-1830) English writer and essayist

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