



# talking about...

May 2011

... designing better relationships for better outcomes

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## Feeling Successful

**"One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation."**

... Arthur Ashe (1943 - 1993) US tennis player

Here is a question for you. How successful do you feel?

One of the interesting aspects of coaching others lies in exploring their sense of what they have achieved. With life being so busy in today's world, many people seem to go through their days moving from one thing to the next and then the next and then the next. This perpetual motion often leaves people with little time to reflect on what they have done and, more importantly, what they have achieved.

Indeed, when asked, many people feel they have achieved very little despite their undeniable "busyness". You ask the question, their eyes gaze into space yet they cannot point to what they have achieved. They know they are doing a lot yet there always seems to be more to do. The focus is on what has to be done next rather than what has been done.

What is the impact of this lack of sense of achievement?

In general, human beings have a tendency to either be defensive or creative. A defensive stance comes when we know what we don't want and we seek to get away from it. We "move away". We initially have a great deal of energy to move away but once we are far enough away from what we don't want, that energy tends to lessen. This can be seen as a process of coping.

On the other hand, we can have a tendency where we focus on what we do want. With such a tendency, we are goal oriented and have a "moving towards" orientation. The closer we get to the goal, the more energy we have for it, assuming the goal is something that is important to us. This can be seen as a process of creating.

The challenge for many people is they know what they don't want but can not so easily identify what they do want.

Without goals and a sense of achievement towards those goals, we will tend to fall into a "moving away" orientation. We will spend our energy ensuring we don't have what we don't want rather than spending it achieving what we do want.

For individuals and organisations this presents a challenge. If people do not feel successful, their energy levels to achieve outcomes drop off. They start to feel they are on a bit of a treadmill; spending a lot of energy and not getting very far. After a while, this takes its toll and people start to go through the motions simply to cope. They become defensive.

Hence it is important for yourself and those around you to feel successful and have the sense of progress.

The key is to create a habit of feeling successful. Here is one way you can do this:

At the start of each week, identify what you want to achieve this week and what you achieved last week. Be realistic about this.

At the start of each day and before you open your email, identify two or three things you want to and can achieve today. Be realistic about this.

Now look at your email and prioritise any requests into what you want to achieve in order to establish what you will achieve today and the context of what you want to achieve

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this week. This will allow for a more proactive approach to handling priorities during the day.

At the end of the day, spend a couple of minutes reflecting on what you have done.

This might seem like a simple thing to do but it is just amazing how many people do not reflect on their achievements. We invite you to consider doing this. We invite you to feel more successful.

**"The energy of the mind is the essence of life."**

... Aristotle (384BC - 322BC) Greek writer and philosopher

## A Political Conundrum ...

*A different take on an oldie but a goodie ... thanks to Greg Stephenson for this one.*

One day, while walking down the street a Member of Parliament is tragically hit by a truck and dies.

His soul arrives in heaven and is met by St. Peter at the entrance.

"Welcome to heaven", says St. Peter.

"Before you settle in, it seems there is a problem. We seldom see a high official around these parts, you see, so we're not sure what to do with you."

"No problem, just let me in", says the man.

"Well, I'd like to, but I have orders from higher up. What we'll do is have you spend one day in hell and one in heaven. Then you can choose where to spend eternity."

"Really, I've made up my mind. I want to be in heaven", says the MP.

"I'm sorry, but we have our rules."

And with that, St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell. The doors open and he finds himself in the middle of a green golf course. In the distance is a clubhouse and standing in front of it are all his friends and other politicians who had worked with him.

Everyone is very happy and in evening dress. They run to greet him, shake his hand, and reminisce about the good times they had while getting rich at the expense of the people.

They play a friendly game of golf and then dine on lobster, caviar and champagne.

Also present is the devil, who really is a very friendly and nice guy who has a good time dancing and telling jokes. They are having such a good time that before he realizes it, it is time to go.

Everyone gives him a hearty farewell and waves while the elevator rises...

The elevator goes up, up, up and the door reopens on heaven where St. Peter is waiting for him.

"Now it's time to visit heaven."

So, twenty four hours pass with the MP joining a group of contented souls moving from cloud to cloud, playing the harp and singing. They have a good time and, before he realizes it, the 24 hours have gone by and St. Peter returns.

"Well then, you've spent a day in hell and another in heaven. Now choose your eternity."

The MP reflects for a minute, then he answers, "Well, I would never have said it before, I mean heaven has been delightful, but I think I would be better off in hell."

So St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell.

Now the doors of the elevator open and he's in the middle of a barren land covered with waste and garbage.

He sees all his friends, dressed in rags, picking up the trash and putting it in black bags as more trash falls from above.

The devil comes over to him and puts his arm around his shoulder. "I don't understand" stammers the MP.

"Yesterday I was here and there was a golf course and clubhouse, and we ate lobster and caviar, drank champagne, and danced and had a great time. Now there's just a wasteland full of garbage and my friends look miserable. What happened?"

The devil looks at him, smiles and says, "Yesterday we were campaigning... Today you voted."

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