

Tidings

We've written this year our share of articles critical of the way things are. We've scathed and squabbled, reasoned and ranted, and not without ample justification. Things were tough all over.

We could, this years' end, recount the many shortcomings surrounding us all. But it's cold enough outside without blowing our chill wind on the proceedings.

Instead, we're going to pass along seven tidings which might be of considerable comfort and joy to anyone trying to make a real difference in this turbulent world. A tiding is a piece of information, perhaps news. These tidings require only your own permission to employ and might well transform your experience.

- 1- Accentuate the positive.
- 2- Forget how it was supposed to be.
- 3- Depend upon your community.
- 4- Go organic!
- 5- Engage with passion!
- 6- Unconditionally trust!
- 7- Ask for what you want!

We hope the True North twist on these old ideas will help you rest a little merrier. If this list seems unlikely to transform anything, we invite you to nibble them one at a time. No way to know which nibble will be the one to satisfy your particular hunger.

God rest ye merry!

David Schmaltz & Amy Schwab

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"The right stuff for your real world"

Volume 11 Number 1

Comfort and Joy

1- Accentuate the Positive.

The old Johnny Mercer lyric advises. "You've got to accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative, latch on to the affirmative, don't mess with Mister In-Between." Bullshit. Accentuating the positive doesn't require deliberate elimination of any negative and won't inoculate you against indecision. Just noticing the positive will quite naturally blunt the negative and can provide at least one alluring choice when you find yourself impaled on the horns of yet another disabling dilemma.

The Appreciative Inquiry® folks got it right. All change rests on the full, albeit temporary acceptance of the way things are. Things always include some positive, and focusing upon the negative as the foundation for change is rather like sinking footings into quicksand.

The powerful points of leverage are always found in what's working, not what's broken and needs fixing. Doing more of what already works guarantees immediate facility and holds the potential to co-opt what doesn't work. No need to dress up in a hoop skirt and play Pollyanna, just notice what's working and toss a little accentuation in that direction.



2- Forget How It Was Supposed To Be.

We live in a time of amplified expectations, where how it was supposed to be colors every achievement. This isn't just a dumb way to live, it's a dandy way to kill every possibility for joy. If the final arbiter of success must be how your meager imagination thought it was going to be, you can successfully eliminate any excuse for celebrating.

Try on this alternative for size: How it turned out is how it was supposed to be. How does that feel? Weird, huh? [*Doesn't this perspective justify a lot of crap? Don't carry my suggestion to unintended endings.*] Strive, sure. But be generous with yourself, too. No one can fix the past. Heck, we can't even very reliably change the present. We can accept how it is as how it is, and judge it not compared to what it was supposed to be, but to what it positions us for next.

The least successful seem to focus upon fixing their past, which can't be changed except by changing their stories about it. Our expectations for the future are unavoidably naive. The future arrives in guises no imagination could have seen. How it was supposed to be should slip right through our hands as we pick up the reins and hail our reindeer up and on again.

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3- Depend Upon Your Community.

Until we engage with community, we're playing in the bush league. Community includes everyone who can effect and everyone effected by whatever you're pursuing, and it's always larger than you think. No one has unquestioned authority over any community. Each member has a stake in your outcome. They might not realize this.

It's typical that a community doesn't fully recognize their stake. You'll hear all of the pleadings to the "powers that be" that never really were. The community IS the powers that be, if only they could see. Trust their wisdom and invite them into the conversation. Give them some guidelines and get their feet on what would otherwise be only your street, and help them stumble upon their power.

If you respect their wisdom, you'll experience it. Cutting their meat for them will only extend their adolescence. Inviting them in, reminding them that they are sitting at the table with others surprisingly similar to them selves, and engaging in conversation with them will reassure you that you are in the presence of wisdom beyond your expectations. So revere your community. They will reward your trust in them. Every time.

4- Go Organic!

Do you inhabit a screwed up, clockwork workplace or a self-replicating organic one? Your labels can make the difference between satisfying work experiences and disgruntling ones. If you believe this is a clockwork universe, someone's timing will always be off. Seeing those same experiences as organic dances can

transform imperfection into more nourishing frames of reference.

Going organic means appreciating differences rather than simply demanding uniformity. While we might connect because of our similarities, our differences make us strong.

Recognize the principle of equifinality, that there are an infinite number of ways to achieve any result and that, given this fact, our ability to predict the right path is most certainly beside the point. Imagine a world requiring no reformation. Revere your own unique characteristics and you'll find yourself revering others', too!

5- Engage With Passion!

Cynicism is the wounded optimist's cheap armor. It seems to protect while merely inhibiting healing. Any work can be worthy of passionate engagement. If you can't find the juice, look again. Are you mistaking the medium for the purpose, the dented frying pan for the exquisite meal? This is one certain way to find dusty cynicism everywhere!

Our work lives are bounded by petty obligations: meaningless paperwork, mindless procedures, clueless imperatives, but these are mere window dressing. Should we mistake this book for its cover, we'll judge content by presentation and mistake wisdom for drudgery.

Find your project within your project assignment. Invent a juicy purpose for your personal involvement. Your time is non-refundable however you engage. Make it golden by seeing it as the means for passionately pursuing your personal purpose. You're worth it.

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Neither Here Nor There

Halfway here and halfway there, we each stand somewhere.
Filled with fears and hopes and dreams which are neither here nor there.
Imagination's feeble and fate could be our friend,
depending upon where we think we'll be standing when it ends.

Assuming, of course, that what we see contains a start or end,
standing neither here nor there can confuse the best of friends.
'Cause somewhere isn't ever here nor qualified as there.
I make the case that anyplace is good enough to share.

You might stand on shoulders and be reaching for a star,
halfway here and part way there, where ever the Hell you are!
Love life at the scale of life and treasure the in-betweening,
for this is where, neither here nor there, life hides all its meaning.

Upcoming Events

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More Tidings

Links to recently published articles:

The Pleasing Paradox

<http://tinyurl.com/2grqh1>

November Issue Architect Institute of America's Practice Management Digest.

"When there is no vision, the people perish." Proverbs 29:18 But what happens when they DO have vision?

Dead Reckoning

June 18, 2007 Projects@Work:

<http://tinyurl.com/2ubaau>

Think you can predict the future?

How Lucky Can You Get?

August 16, 2007 Projects@Work

<http://tinyurl.com/2qx56m>

How has fast food influenced inherently slow work?

McMethod

November 1, 2007 Projects@Work

<http://tinyurl.com/2s73d8>

In sincere homage to Dr. Paul Watzlawick, who died this past March:

Why I'm Not Agile

April 5, 2007 Projects@Work.

<http://tinyurl.com/355bqb>

Connections to Community

Stay connected! *Compass* comes out infrequently, but we're all over the place every day.

For more frequent infusions of the True North perspective, connect here:

- Mastering Project Work Yahoo! group. Register here:
<http://tinyurl.com/2rlsjs>
- David's *Pure Schmaltz* Blog
<http://tinyurl.com/23uyg9>
- Amy *AmySchwab@Work* blog:
<http://tinyurl.com/2q993c/>

Comfort and Joy - Continued

6- Unconditionally Trust.

You can depend upon others to do just what they do. Trust is just this simple. Expecting others to do what they've never done is not trust, but fantasy. You might aspire for another to act as you would like them to act and feel violated when your pseudo-trust is disappointed. But their discouraging action didn't cause the disappointment, your unrealistic aspiration did.

Trust is one form of radical acceptance of the way things are. Sure, it's popular to encourage almost everything to be different than it has proven itself to be. Encourage away, but trust others to respond as they respond. You needn't ever be surprised when that dog barks, the cat scratches, or those fishes remain so remarkably unaware of the water surrounding them.

The way things are is pretty dependably the way things are. We are masters of only the universe as it is, never masters of the universe we aspire it to be. Mastery comes from mindfully grounding aspirations, not from artfully projecting them. We only need to expect the unexpected when we ignore the way things have always been.



7- Ask for What You Want!

What do you want? This is the miracle question.

I struggle to distinguish between like, want, and need. I can like something without wanting it. I can also want something without needing it. I suppose maturity helps me make these fine distinctions.

Amy and I were plotting with a colleague, when she asked him, "What do you want?"

"I'd like ...," he began.

To which Amy replied, "But what do you want?"

"Like, want, what does it matter?" our friend responded.

"Here's the difference," Amy continued. "I like you." She waited a few seconds as this statement sunk in before affecting a seductive look, then said, "I want you!" Our friend almost fell out of his chair!

Before asking for what I want, it's helpful to make this one, small distinction between like, want, and need. Prefer what I like. Attract what I want. Go out and get what I need.

How do I attract what I want? I hold what I want close to my heart. If it sits comfortably there, it's probably something I really want. I troll for opportunities to get what I want. With this intention sitting comfortably close to my heart, I'm more likely to notice when my heart's desire appears.

When it appears, if I wait for permission to ask for what I want, I've found that I do a lot more waiting than asking, and very little getting what I want.

But I can start small, even at work. by first getting clear about what I want. This seems a simple, invisible, undictable preface to asking for what I want. Because if I'm not clear about what I want, I'm unlikely to notice when an opportunity to ask for it appears.

Now here's the magic part. Rather than insisting upon asking for what you want when you notice the opportunity to ask appearing, notice when you don't ask. Don't beat yourself up about it, just notice. Observe reflectively. If you find yourself asking less than noticing, you've shown yourself to be completely human. If you notice that you're noticing a lot more than you used to, you're perfectly positioned for the next step, asking for what you want.

Since wanting isn't so urgent as needing, and more insistent than liking, missing opportunities to ask for what you want is no terrible crime. But not even noticing when the opportunity to ask for what you want occurs seems the very recipe for concluding that you can't ever get what you want.

Notice today. Get clear about what you want, hold that close to your heart, and watch yourself choosing not to speak up for your heart's desire. Your heart will teach you to ask, when the times are right, once it notices a few opportunities to ask for what you really want slip away.



The Blind Watchman

When the owner visited his garden, he was shocked to find that someone had been stealing his most precious fruit. Interrogating the two watchman, a blind man and a lame man, responsible for guarding the garden, each denied culpability.

The blind watchman said, "I surely cannot be guilty of the theft of a thing I could not even see."

The lame watchman reported, "I wasn't able to lay my hand on any of the fruit, for you know that my legs refuse to carry me a step."

Considering the situation carefully, the orchard owner asked the blind watchman to carry the lame watchman over to the trees. In this way, the old testament scholars reported, God will judge his people by uniting the body with the soul, and fix responsibility on the reunited whole. (from Leviticus Rabba 4)



"In the instant between perception and action, belief and behavior, lies the power to change the world."

About Compass

Since 1996, Compass has been publishing dangerously sane ideas to a world-wide community numbering in the thousands.

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You may request a free subscription to Compass by sending an email to info@projectcommunity.com, and telling us why. We welcome your request.

Appreciations

God bless these merry gentle folks, let nothing them dismay. For each has helped us live our dreams, in most remarkable ways. They saved us from some sad, ignoble fate. So, tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy. We appreciate your comforting and joy.

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