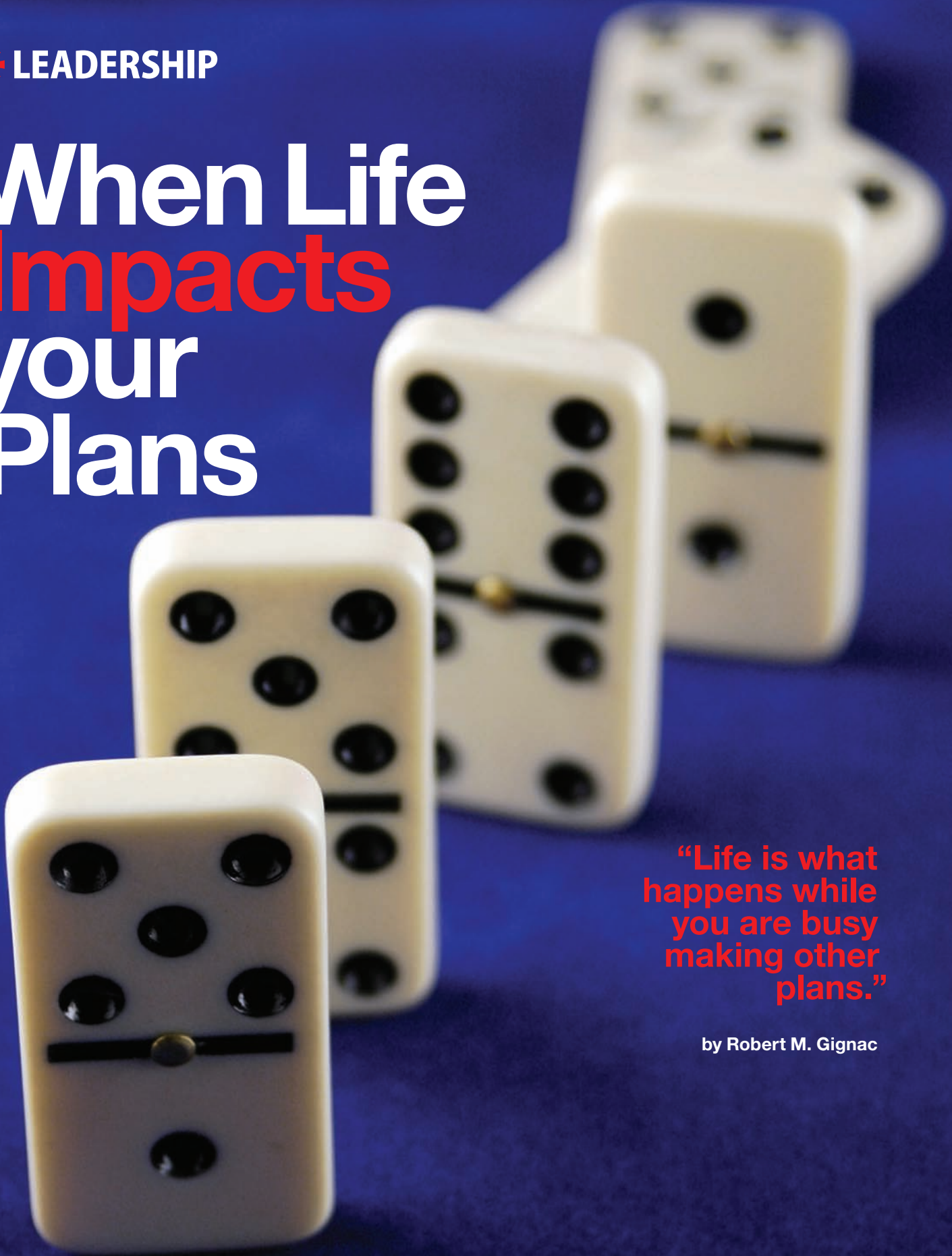


*** LEADERSHIP**

When Life **Impacts** your Plans

“Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans.”

by Robert M. Gignac



Someone once said, "Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans". They could not have been closer to the truth. It is about 2:00 am and I am sitting with my wife in a hospital room in Brockville, Ontario, bathed in an eerie blue glow from my laptop as I am attempting to write this piece in order to keep a commitment to myself that I get this article in on time. We are here because my mother-in-law is slowly losing her battle with cancer, and there is no more important place for us to be right now.

Unfortunately, this scene is becoming too familiar for our family. We lost my father-in-law unexpectedly in April 2005 after

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a short but intense struggle with cancer. But I can sense your question being formed as I type this, "What does this have to do with my business and its operation?"

Back in early 2004, my wife and I made a "life decision" for her to accept a transfer with a multi-national company to their corporate office in Switzerland. While excited, we both understood that it would have a significant impact on my business, as my clients and business opportunities are in Canada. No problem, technology would solve most of the communication issues; time-

shifting my day would solve some others.

Then "life" started adding unexpected complications. We were back in Canada for 87 days in the spring as we tried to help Dad fight what was ultimately an impossible battle. As I type this, we have been here for another 30 as we try to help Mom with her struggle. There is no place else we feel we should be. Fortunately, corporate multi-nationals have facilities to help employees deal with issues like this—not so for smaller organizations where you are both the employer and employee.

We had a "plan" for what our international experience would be like, and it did not include an event such as this, let alone two such events in one year. Did we have a contingency plan? No. Should we have had one? Ummm, yes.

Earlier this evening, we sat in awe of the power of Mother Nature, as we watched the events unfold in the southern U.S. in the aftermath of Katrina—devastation on a scale that we have not seen in our continent in decades. Setting the human factors aside for a moment, when (or if?) the cities are rebuilt, where will the jobs come from? Major employers will have the luxury of moving relocated employees around, and will no doubt move jobs and facilities back into the region when possible. My concern is for the small and medium-sized companies that do not have the resources to do that.

Studies on disaster recovery for business have shown that businesses that shut down for more than 30 days due to natural disaster, fire, floods, stand close to a 90% chance of never reopening their doors. Current estimates from the devastated area are potentially two to three months before companies might be able to think of simply getting back to try to salvage what they can of their operations.

Effectively, I have been away from my business for over 100 days this year. Yes, I've been trying to do what I can from the road, hospital rooms, at the homes of friends who have helped by putting us up to ease our struggles. The technology helps, but as many of you know, there is nothing that can take the place of your simple, physical presence for many things that we need to do in our organizations.

My point? You have your business plan, you have your goals and objectives, you are focused on the future and building your business. However, at some point, life is going to intrude and it will not care what your plans, goals, and objectives are. Your job will be to react and adapt—and if you have given some thought to contingency planning—you will be able to be in the 10% of businesses that will get through life's upheavals and perhaps even emerge stronger than you were before.

It has been a strange and difficult year. I have been in Switzerland when I wanted to be here in Canada, then I have been here so much and been unable to stay focused, continually feeling the need to be back in my office in order to stay working. At the end of it all, I know that there is no place more important for us to be, than with our parents who were there to support, teach, and encourage us to be the people we have become. We will be stronger for the experience. You will too when your turn arrives. Thanks for reading. **E**

Robert Gignac is the owner of Taynac & Associates (currently on a two year assignment in Switzerland), providing keynote presentations, seminars and workshops on personal development, motivation, and leadership. He is also the co-author of the Canadian best seller "Rich is a State of Mind" now in its second printing. Reviews and a sample chapter are available at www.richisastateofmind.com. To book Robert to speak at your next event, please contact him at rgignac@taynac.com or check their Web site at www.taynac.com.