

Your Richly Imagined Future — Part 2

BY ROBERT M. GIGNAC

In the November/December issue, we examined ideas surrounding ‘horizons,’ and the first two steps in creating a ‘Richly Imagined Future’. *Step 1, Current Reality*: know it, understand it, make it clear, then let it go. *Step 2, Your Richly Imagined Future*: creating a mission of service for others. Let’s move to the next steps.

Step 3: Learn to Disrupt. How many times have you been here: a company hires a ‘motivational’ speaker for a corporate meeting. They whip up everyone with the standard buzzwords: “Don’t stop at the top,” “Today is first day of the rest of your life,” “If you can dream it, you can achieve it”? Feel free to substitute whatever slogans you might have heard. Everyone is pumped up, hands linked, singing “Kumbya,” followed by the ritual distribution of sweatshirts and coffee mugs, having shown you pictures of the ‘Promised Land.’

It usually takes about 48 hours and then someone writes a caustic e-mail or makes a totally arbitrary decision and everyone comes swooping back to reality. All we have left for our time is another sweatshirt, coffee mug, and a vision of a place we cannot go.

I urge you *not* to show people the Promised Land if they cannot go—it’s cruel. But it made me ponder the question: Why don’t they go? I doubt it’s a question of intent or desire, so why don’t they make it? They don’t know how to disrupt where they are. In life we have two options: 1) You can disrupt yourself, or 2) waiting for the world to disrupt you. In either case, you *will* be disrupted. If the world disrupts you, good luck. If you disrupt yourself, you get to make the choices. Choose wisely between these two options.

Too many of us say we want to set out on a cruise, yet we want to leave the boat tied to the dock at the same time. If we’re going on a cruise we must untie the boat, we must disrupt our lives if we are going to experience something different.

I like the metaphor of Lego. Flash to your house on a rainy Saturday morning—“Dad, there’s nothing to do!” and your im-

mediate response is: “I’ve spent more on toys for you in the last year than my parents spent on me in their entire life; when I was your age we had to make our own toys!” Their response: a blank stare. Finally, they dig out their Lego, and make something for us, maybe some sort of flying vehicle. They’re excited to show us where the pilot sits, how the wings fold, etc.

On the way back to their room, you take one last look at them, and what are they doing? Flying their creation down the hall, crashing it into a hundred pieces. Your response: “What are you doing, you just made it?” Here’s what kids know about Lego that we seem to have forgotten. It’s as much about taking it apart as putting it together. Not us though, we’re adults. We use glue.

If you and I are going to create a ‘Richly Imagined Future,’ we have to start disrupting things in our life. All of us are stuck in our routines. We cannot move somewhere else until we untie the boat. We want everyone else around us to change while we stay the same. We’re too comfortable. We have to disrupt if we want to go somewhere else.

Step 4: Making Choices. Making choices is the bridge between ‘Current Reality’ and your ‘Richly Imagined Future’. Choices can be hard to make. Did you know that ‘choice’ and ‘power’ are synonymous? The people with power are the people who are making choices—not recommendations, not being on the advisory committee—there’s no power in that.

What people want today is to make choices, not to be treated like paint-by-number sets by their organizations. I see plenty of anger and signs of depression in many of the companies in which I consult. Some of this depression is anger turned inwards. We get angry with ourselves. It seems so self-defeating, why would we do that? We get angry with ourselves because we have choices to make and we’re not making them.

I am confident that every person reading this article right now has a choice to make

and isn’t making it—including me. Some of these are not that consequential: “Should you buy the printer you saw on sale at Staples?” Answer: “Yes!” Others are gut-wrenching, life-changing choices: “Should I stay in my current job?” “How do I deal with a difficult client/co-worker/employee?” “Should I pursue my writing/consulting full-time?” These are difficult choices—which scare us deep inside.

The timing for all of these difficult choices will be different for each of us. But I do know this: deep inside we already know what the answer is.

If I could put two buttons on your desk right now, “Go/Stay,” “Buy/Sell,” “Red/Green”—Bang! You know which one to push already, but you will claim you are waiting for more data. No, some of us are waiting for somebody else to push the button for us, that way we can become a martyr. Then we can say, “Do you believe what they did to me? I had no choice!”

We have to start pushing our own buttons, making our own choices, in order to move from our ‘Current Reality’ to our ‘Richly Imagined Future,’ bringing inspiration and meaning to the people with whom we interact. Ultimately, it all comes down to choices—what magazines such as this one are all about. Read. Learn. Do something. Make a choice.

If we look inside, we’ll realize that it is up to us to continue expanding our horizons. When we learn to connect with and impact the people around us, we’ll worry less about linear planning models, data, and all of the things we’ve been taught business was supposed to be about. When we learn to positively influence other people, creating a mission of service, only then will we be able to confidently find our ‘Richly Imagined Future’. **SBCM**

Robert Gignac is the owner of Taynac & Associates, offering keynotes/workshops on personal and team development, and he presented ‘Your Richly Imagined Future’ at the Small Business Information Expo in November. Contact him at: rgignac@taynac.com or check their Web site at www.taynac.com.