

WHAT IS YOUR “BEST ADVICE”?

BY ROBERT M. GIGNAC

It is often said that “free advice” is worth the price you paid for it—nothing. I’m not convinced this is always the case. Many times during our life or business career, well-meaning family members, close friends, or business associates will pass along little nuggets of advice to us—and we’ll choose to ignore them, use them, or sometimes we simply file them away until the right opportunity arrives.

It was one year ago today (as I write this) that I spoke to

my Grandfather for the last time. It was on his 83rd birthday and he passed away six days later. I suspect we both knew that it would be our last conversation; he had advanced-stage cancer and time was not on our side.

In a career that spanned truck driver, union leader, and president of an international trucking company, he was not prone to dishing out unsolicited advice. Early in my career (I was at that age when I knew “everything”) I asked him, “What



is the best piece of advice you can give me?” and I guess I was expecting one of the usual platitudes, “work hard”, “develop your skills”, “find work you are passionate about”, etc. He was quiet for a moment and at the point where I was going to repeat my question because I was afraid he hadn’t heard me he said, “Go to work each day willing to be fired for the things you believe in.”

I was young enough (and a bit full of myself) that I just said “Ummm, thanks I guess...” and I filed the information away. I never thought that I would actually use it, until the day—a dozen years later—when I got fired from a job I really enjoyed. Why? Because I had an opinion that was diametrically opposed to that of the sales manager I worked for, and when presented with a “my way or the highway” ultimatum, I held my position and was sent on down the highway.

I was crushed; this wasn’t how it was supposed to have worked out. I called my Grandfather and asked, “Do you have any more advice—since your last advice just cost me my job?” He was quiet for a moment and said, “At some point years from now you’ll understand that this was the best thing that could have happened”. Great! I wanted something immediate and he’s telling me to wait for years to make sense of this?

Well, you know what’s coming don’t you? Of course it was the best possible thing that could have happened. It launched me in an entirely different career direction, and I tried a couple of alternate paths before I stumbled onto the one that I am now pursuing.

However, there are those rare instances when advice comes from someone that you have met only minutes before, have only had a brief exposure to, and are unlikely to meet again. This is exactly what happened on a short plane ride from Vancouver to Victoria in mid-July.


I was flying to Victoria to speak at a conference of Canadian financial advisors—the top 5% of this particular company—an invitation-only event. The flight from

Vancouver to Victoria is really just an arc that takes about 16 minutes but provided me with a valuable insight I’d like to share. I was sitting beside a well-dressed, older gentleman (well, older than me) heading home to Victoria after his granddaughter’s graduation in Calgary. I asked him if there was one key piece of advice that he shared with her and he smiled and said, “Show up completely.”

I must have looked a bit puzzled, and he continued, “People go to work every day, but very few show up. They are there physically, not mentally, they aren’t engaged or passionate about what they do, and frankly they just take up space. If you want to be successful in any field, show up completely. It’s probably not what you expected to hear, but after all, you did ask.” He smiled and returned to reading the in-flight magazine.

I believe I’m getting to the point in my life when I’m finally starting to understand that significant things come from the situations you least expect and from the people you least expect to hear them from. What is the best piece of advice you have received? E-mail me at rgignac@taynac.com with the best advice you’ve received and I’ll select ten pieces to share with Enterprise readers in an upcoming article. For your help, I’ll send a copy of my Canadian best seller “Rich is a State of Mind” to those whose pieces are selected.

Between now and then consider what occupant of seat 3D said: strive to show up completely. But not only that, show up completely every day willing to be fired for the things you believe in. I believe it is the merger of two excellent pieces of advice into one, and I look forward to hearing about yours.

To my Grandfather who inspired this article, thank you for the advice. I strive to keep it in mind every day. 

Robert Gignac is the owner of Taynac & Associates (now in year five of a two year assignment in Switzerland), providing keynote presentations, seminars, and workshops on personal financial development and motivation. He is the co-author of the Canadian best seller “Rich is a State of Mind” now in its 6th printing. Sample chapter and reviews at: www.richisastateofmind.com. To book Robert to speak at your next corporate or organization event, please contact him at: rgignac@taynac.com or www.taynac.com



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