

## **COLUMN: As The Saws Turn**

### **TITLE: The One Thing You Need To Know**

I was part of a leadership seminar yesterday where one of the speakers – Marcus Buckingham, author of several books on management and leadership, - promised to share with us ‘the one thing you need to know’ to have the greatest possible impact over the longest period of time – sustained individual success.

It sounded like another one of those bold get-rich-quick or solve-all-your-problems gimmicks. And he didn’t even make us wait until the end of his presentation to share it with us. He announced it at the beginning and then built a strong case for it over the next 60 minutes. So what is the one thing you need to know?

Find out what you don’t like doing and stop doing it.

Yeah, that’ll work.

That was my initial reaction. I suspect it was many of yours as well. But don’t turn the page just yet. He does make a strong case.

Another way to look at things you don’t like doing is to think of them as weaknesses. Why don’t you like doing them? Most likely, it’s because you are not very good at them. They give you no sense of satisfaction. Think for a moment about how our culture is so ‘weakness focused’. What does your employer spend most of their time on during your annual review...your strengths or your weaknesses? As a parent, what do you focus most of your attention on when you get your child’s report card...the ‘A’ in history or the ‘F’ in math? Face it; we live in a culture focused on fixing weaknesses rather than building on strengths.

Neurologists will tell you that an individual's natural talents begin developing at about age three, and by age 15 they are solidly established. Individuals will grow the most in the areas they know the best – in their talent areas. And there are four clues to talent: (1) Rapid Learning: what do you learn quickly? (2) Yearnings: what are you drawn toward? What holds your interest? (3) Satisfaction: what was your best day at work in the last three months? What were you doing? What did you like about it? (4) Performance: what can explain a recent success? What were you doing?

It really helps to examine how you spend your time. Are you spending time doing things you really don't like to do and not doing them well? What percentage of your day do you spend doing things you really, really like to do? A recent poll of employees in a wide variety of occupations found that only 17% of us say we spend MOST of our day doing things we really like to do. That's pretty scary.

Does that mean 83% of us are spending most of our day doing things we don't like doing, and therefore, may not be really good at doing? Now I'm starting to get the idea. Wouldn't we all be better off if we could figure out what we don't like to do and stop doing it...and start doing the things we are gifted to do and are probably very good at?

Here's another question for you...can you identify, right now, what part of your job you don't like doing? Has your boss ever helped you stop doing some of these things? Just in case he hasn't, Buckingham lists four actions that may help you cut the weaknesses out of your life:

- (1) Stop doing it and see if anyone cares. In some cases this may be a pretty bold move, but in others it may just work...
- (2) Find a partner. Find someone who has real talent in the area where you are the weakest, someone who loves to do what you hate to do.

- (3) Carve a new role for yourself. Find a role that plays to your talent. Spend some time analyzing your talent and then go for it.
- (4) Change your perspective. Look at those weaknesses from a new perspective – through the lens of your strength.

The longer you put up with doing the things that weaken you, and wasting strengths, the more miserable you will become. Kind of like the beautiful sundial placed in the shade of a tree...

See you on the show floor.

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