

SDT Essays

January 1975

MOVEMENT

On the go! On the go! Since our marriage in 1969 our family's track record, in terms of distances covered has been enviable, gruesome or amazing depending on how one feels about travel. Phoebe has been around the world twice at 4 years old. Here is our itinerary:

1969 - Utah, Massachusetts and numerous states in transit.

1970 - Massachusetts, Utah, New York, Maine, Vermont, Conn., New Hampshire, Pennsylvania.

1971 - Lebanon, Syria, France, Cyprus.

1972 - India, Lebanon, Italy, France.

1973 - India - Agra, Khajuraho, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta - Thailand, Hong Kong, Japan, U.S.A., England, Holland.

1974 - India - Indus Valley and Assam, Nepal, Philippines, Indonesia, Hong Kong, France, Egypt, Australia.

Yes, we have enjoyed being able to see the world and experience other cultures and civilizations, but there have been drawbacks also.

Toffler in Future Shock says one of the challenges of modern man as the pace of life quickens, will be his ability to develop more lasting relationships over shorter time periods. To be sure we have made many associations around the world - we feel very close to some whom we have known for just a short time - but "will they come to my funeral!"

I suppose it's strange to be concerned about ones funeral, but one experience over the last year (1974) stands out. Mom and Dad's friend, Ralph Olsen, died in his relatively young 50's. His funeral was attended by over 1,000 all of whom had known him, dealt with him, and respected him over a number of years. Can the relationships built up by us in our travels be as lasting or as durable as those Ralph Olsen apparently had? Maybe it's possible, but I don't feel like the ties we have made with others over much shorter periods, however strong, can be as durable as the ties Ralph Olsen enjoyed. Even if they are - who will come from Nairobi, Karachi, Hong Kong, Tokyo, or Bangkok to my funeral?

(END)

JUNE PAPER

August 2, 1974

THE OLD BOY NETWORK

A friend of mine from business school joined Citibank with me. After having spent a year at his first assignment he and his wife visited us in India. He was full of stories about his first year with the organization and most of them centered around his boss.

Charlie had documented evidence that his boss was incompetent that he was derelict in his duties and that he was a homosexual. Charlie was incredibly frustrated working for this man because he was unable, as he saw it, to self-fulfill and to make a contribution to the organization. Charlie had decided that while on leave in New York, he would spill the beans on his boss, in the hopes that the bank, as a result of his revelations, would get rid of the "old fool."

Shortly after Charlie's New York visit, he (Charlie) resigned from the bank. Apparently, the bank was more intent on keeping the "old fool" than it was in holding onto young Charlie. Charlie (not perfect himself by any means) ran up against the "old boy network." His boss had been in the bank for over 20 years, certainly a long enough time for his own superiors to recognize the traits that Charlie had seen. Obviously, the boss had developed some kind of tenure in the organization that put him into a "protected" category. It turned out that Charlie's boss had, in fact, hoined the organization with a couple of now Senior executives in the bank. Charlie's boss was being protected. Who knows, Charlie may have been right, but by bringing the matter to a head, he lost out.

Here at Philcad, I find myself in a similar situation to Charlie's. Like Charlie's boss, mine also has been in the organization for over 20 years. His present position is not a Senior one, especially considering his time with the bank. He is very much of a gentleman - - soft spoken and polite. But, in his present position he appears to me to be insecure, afraid, protective and incompetent. I say this after having worked for, in my judgement, relatively competent supervisors up to this point. I will not go into a lot of detail but each day brings new frustrations.

In a very general sense this man's actions are usually directed towards retaining status quo and stifling creativity and imagination - or constructive change. When he should be worrying about whether the learning process is taking hold, he is in actuality concerned about whether so and so arrives on time, whether the desks are properly arranged, or whether he should write another memo to put on the notice board.

Well, for me to do what Charlie tried would be foolish. Certainly despite this stifling environment, there must be something that can be done from my side, without being pushy or proud, to improve the quality of the program. Shouldn't that "something" be along the lines of engaging in those types of activities which would help to make an insecure man more self confident? Isn't this a much greater challenge than conspiring to tear ^{my boss} him down, as Charlie did with his boss? This way over the long term, the program would be benefited. Going the other way would more than likely produce another victim of the "old boy network" (me) and not in any way improve the Philcad program. More on the boss situation next time.

Steve

June 14, 1974

MAY PAPER

The expression, "Live every day as though it were your last," rarely hit home for me with the force that it did during our stay in Calcutta, from December, 1972 to April, 1974. I had to change the wording of the phrase to make it relevant to my task and objectives while on the job, but the basic meaning still remains: "Perform every day as though the Head Office inspectors will be there at 4:PM to do a full evaluation of the previous year's performance."

I found in Calcutta that the establishment of a smooth, efficient operating unit is really a long term proposition. People must be trainedñ they must accept that what they set out to do has merit. Once people are trained in a system, or procedure, that system must be put in place. Then, the bugs must be ironed out. Perhaps the system needs changing. If so, people need retraining. This is a long process, but after hard work, if the system is appropriate, the end product will result in an improvement. The inspectors, whose arrival date is a closely guarded secret, will certainly notice the absence of long term work and preparation if in fact none has been done.

While superior standards of operational efficiency take time and hard work to achieve, without constant followup or close monitoring, they can deteriorate while ones back is turned. If this deterioration is allowed to occur due to neglect, implementation of the entire system must begin once again. Furthermore, without a continued effort to seek out further improvements, despite the fact that

acceptable levels of performance may have already been attained, there will be a tendency to actually retrogress. Status quo in effect is really retrogression, as it really means letting up. Letting up is a signal to everyone else to do the same thing. In our newly implemented system it is easy to ignore the fact that X left his keys unattended on his desk. While this may in fact be a violation of basic controls within the system, at first blush it still appears to be a fairly inconsequential matter. Certainly, in terms of the operating unit's broad function, this one act taken alone would be of little consequence--a minor variable within the framework of a broad system. To make an issue of it, in fact might cause embarrassment to X and diminish his overall efficiency. On the other hand, allowing one negligent act to slip through is a signal that one is letting up that future like occurrences are acceptable. Before long one is back to square one, the system having broken down. Finding that point where X does not get offended yet where the omission is brought out into the open is the test of a good manager's mettle, but it must be done.

Now the ultimate reward for all this long term training systems implementation and retraining etc, is that the inspectors will find a good clean shop worthy of praise.

It is a pity that I must learn such simple lessons this late in life after having had them pounded into my head throughout my youth. But, can't the Calcuua Operations experience be compared to one's own life in general? The judgement? The unknown day of reckoning? The necessity of long term preparation? The importance of not relenting? I can see now why it is important to live each day as though it were your last.

Stephen D. Taylor

January 28, 1974

GOALS

Much time has passed since the days where Dad admonished his sons to set goals and objectives. During those days it was hard to picture the relevancy of that advice. In the end I have had to have a goals program forced on me in order to experience its value.

My job performance is evaluated yearly against a set of goals drawn up with the concurrence of my supervisor. Goals this year have included such things as 25% reduction of savings account volumes, holding expenses to 72 levels and so on.

Setting goals in this fashion forces one to ask some questions:

1. Where am I headed over the long haul? The short term?
2. Does this tally with local and institutional policy?
3. What can be done with resources available to move in that direction.
4. What intermediate objectives or bench marks can be established?
5. Would more resources (man power, equipment etc.) speed up achievement of the objective; is the additional cost and risk worth the incremental benefit?

In short, setting goals forces one to plan - to evaluate strengths and weakness, to crystalize objectives in written form and to determine the means for attaining the objectives.

Time spent after planning and goals finalization is dedicated towards achievement of the objectives which have been set. Ultimately, a singleminded effort, with periodic review, to achieve a set

of goals congruent with overall organizational goals enhances the growth and profitability of the institution. The alternative to planning and goal setting - living from day to day - can be disastrous, and spell death in a competitive world. Nor, does setting goals guarantee success. Are they the right goals given constraints and resources etc.?

Now, why can't this same philosophy, ~~be~~ applied so well in dynamic business organizations and other institutions, be applied also to ones family? Can't a family set goals subject to periodic review? If planning and goal setting in the business organization can increase ~~the~~ the probability of growth, profitability and survival in the business organization, couldn't the family also set goals increasing the probability of growth and "survival" in a spiritual or eternal sence? As a family we also must determine where we want to go, to write this down, and then plan how we want to get there. Is the goal realistic? Can we get there given resources and constraints? Periodic review of performance will help us maintaing the right direction. ~~FAMILY GOALS~~

Family goals can include many things: From the concrete and measurable-- Church attendance, family home evenings, scrip/tures etc. to the abstract but just as important--be a good neighbor, love fellow man, do unto others etc. It seems to me that application of principles already found useful in organizations for the purpose of sustaining growth and insuring survival can be just as useful towards family growth and development.