

1 What you give could lead you to even more of what you get!

If you really want to transform your life it is helpful to understand how to take full responsibility for what you can make happen. This means identifying the difference between what you can control and what you can't. It means truly recognising where you do have the power to change things and letting go of the rest.

I know that far too much of my life I spent wasting time trying to control the things over which I had no control and getting more and more stressed when I failed. It was always important to me how people treated me and if they didn't treat me in that way I spent considerable time trying to get them to do so – I thought it was my right.

Understanding the difference

As a group exercise on our Living Leader Programme I ask people how they would like to be treated by everyone they meet. Together we come up with a list that almost always includes things such as, with respect, honestly, openly, kindly, as an equal, with integrity, as an individual and so on. I then ask them this question “Can you *make* people treat you this way?” Of course, the answer is absolutely not. We might be able to influence them but we certainly have no control over making them. How often in life do we spend time trying to get others to treat us in the way we think we deserve to be treated and getting upset when they don't? I certainly behaved this way, especially with my children. The reality is this. We have no control over ‘get’, we only have control over ‘give’.

So the conclusion that we come to is that if we want people to treat us in the ways that are important to us then we in turn need to be respectful, honest, open, kind, treat others as equals, behave with integrity and show that we think each person is unique. This does not necessarily mean that they will then treat us in the same way, but it certainly is going to make it more likely. The key here is recognising where you do have power and where you don't. You cannot control the way people treat you and if you cannot control it why spend lots of time worrying about it. The only place where you have power is in areas where you do have complete control. However, it is important to be honest and that you truly are giving to give, not deliberately giving to get – that is manipulation!!

Motivation – whose job is it?

Think how often at work you hear managers talking about ‘how do I motivate my team more effectively?’ I know that I always considered that one of the key roles as a manager was to motivate my team and it was some while before I realised how my thinking was not in the best place. Consider for one moment, where does motivation come from? It comes from inside of you so how can anyone push a button that is inside of you. The knack of motivation is inspiring them to motivate themselves. If you believe your role is to motivate them and you do a really good job, what happens when you are not there? So turn your thinking the other way round. Instead of thinking ‘how can I get them to

perform better, how can I get them to be more creative, how can I raise levels of awareness, think instead what can I give them to enable them to perform better, what can I give them to enable them to become more creative, what can I give them to help raise their levels of performance? This may sound like a minor change but it can significantly impact the way you behave and frequently impact your team's performance.

There used to be a huge amount of research supporting the effectiveness of this approach. It was a large movement that started in the States with a man called Robert Greenleaf. It is referred to as 'Servant Leadership' and you will still find books and articles about this everywhere. His view is that you turn an organisation on its head so, for example, in an organisation the CEO is at the bottom and his focus is on what he can give his directors to enable them to become more effective in every way. The directors are thinking, "What can we give to our direct reports" and so on. At the 'top' the people at the coalface are totally focused on what they can give to their customers to enable an even more fulfilling and profitable relationship. And please don't think that when I say this I mean give bigger discounts!!

This works in exactly the same way in your home life. What is it that you can give your partner or your children to enable them to become more loving, more fulfilled, happier? It may be as simple as giving them more of your precious time.

Here's an Idea for You...

Look for someone in your team at work or one of your family who perhaps is lacking motivation or is not performing to the standard that you think they could. Have a look at what you have been doing to date that is failing – I assume failing, otherwise they would not still have a problem – and turn your thinking round totally. Think about what you could give them that would enable them, not you, to improve their performance. It may include things like truly listening to them to understand their needs, giving them some more information, supporting and encouraging their ideas more, giving them appreciation, developing their skills and knowledge.

Defining Ideas....

"From what we get, we can make a living; what we give, however, makes a life"

Arthur Ashe

How Did It Go?

Q. This is so simple it makes me mad that I didn't think of it before. I remember now reading an article about Southwest Airlines and the principles they followed and look how successful they have been. How quickly do you think you can get people to change when you start doing it differently?

A. You are right about Southwest Airlines – the book 'Nuts' by Kevin & Jackie Frieberg about them is well worth reading. To answer your question it entirely depends on how long they have been managed the 'old' way. How much they expect to be told what to do, how much they put all the expectations on you. My suggestion is that you share with them, openly and honestly, what you have just learned and then ask them what it is that you can give to them to enable them to become more effective. That will encourage them to take more responsibility for themselves. You may have to think up a reminder for

yourself to ensure that you don't slip back. Maybe before you start work each day you might ask yourself the question "What is it I can give to today to each member of my team to enable them to become more effective in every way?" However, do remember the point I made earlier about giving to give, not giving to get!

Q. One of my children is a real lazy little g-t! I have tried everything to get him motivated and nothing seems to work. All he wants to do is sit around listening to music or playing computer games. I am at my wits end and would try anything. What do you suggest?

A. Oh dear – I've been there and got the T-shirt, in fact several of them! Firstly, from what you are saying, you are taking total responsibility for his life instead of getting him to do it. Do you still cook for him, clean for him, do his washing? Do you also tell him that he is lazy, doesn't do anything to help and generally whinge at him most of the time? If you are anything like me when my children were younger the answer will be 'yes'. Start with three things. Firstly look for things where you can tell him he is doing well, there must be something! Secondly, stop doing things for him. Tell him that you now believe that he is intelligent enough to be able to do things for himself and you trust him to do them. You may have to set certain standards because it is your house otherwise you could end up going through a fairly unpleasant pain barrier – filthy room, nasty smell emanating from within based on unwashed clothes and empty biscuit packets etc.! Finally, see if you can sit down with him and get him to do his vision for his life and then ask him each day 'If you knew you could you do one thing today that will take you closer to where you want to be, what might you do?'