

DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

Sunday, March 21, 2010

HOW TO BE EXTRAORDINARY

This DISPATCHES article is personal, very personal. It is about me, Richard Czerniawski. No, it is not about me being extraordinary. It's about my life long love and pursuit of learning in order to be extraordinary. It's about my desire, journey and fantasy to develop super powers. While Mike Maloney did not contribute directly to this article I feel, from our working together since the early 1980's (which is a long, long time ago), that he shares this view.

My love of learning and desire to do something extraordinary began as a child with my discovery of the world of books. A simple library card was my ticket to explore new worlds and engage in new ideas. I read voraciously as a child and continue to do so even to this day to learn from those more experienced in life and/or with an important story to tell. At this writing I'm reading, and working to internalize, *The Art Of Learning* by Josh Waitzken, an eight-time National Chess Champion, the subject for the book and movie *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, now a martial arts champion with twenty-one National Championships titles in addition to seven World Championship titles. Now Josh Waitzken is extraordinary!

As a college and graduate student I attended and participated in all my classes (no cutting classes). I wanted to take advantage of the learning opportunities afforded to me by my learned professors. I went beyond the lectures and required reading to tackle the suggested supplemental readings. I wanted to go deep below the surface to learn more than the curriculum offered. I wanted to learn from those that were significantly more experienced and knowledgeable than me.

As a young Naval Aviator I'd strap myself into my aircraft and tell myself that this was my new body where I could, for a moment in time, defy (until the fuel ran out) the inexorable pull of gravity to fly higher and faster than the birds; participate in section take-offs (tight formations); rendezvous on a collision course with other aircraft at closing speeds in excess of hundred of knots; descend from the clouds to find a postage stamp size ship in the middle of the sea and safely put the aircraft down on its pitching deck. To learn to fly was hard work. There were dedicated instructors who taught and drilled me. There were countless hours in the air, link trainers and visualization exercises. But learning to fly truly empowered me with super power.

In martial arts I find myself thanks to master instruction, personal exploration and experimentation, visualization and endless hours of practicing the same thing over and over again capable of deflecting a speeding fist aimed straight for my face as easily as swatting a fly out of the sky and follow-up by throwing a much larger, stronger and younger opponent to the mat with the effortless ease of a Steven Seagal, using less than 5% of my power. Thanks to the power of learning.

Teaching, writing, engaging with practitioners, all serve to satisfy my love of learning and help me be and do more. They provide me with the opportunity to observe, do, experiment, reflect and learn. They help me think through and learn how things work – why things succeed and fail. Importantly, this helps me improve the likelihood of succeeding with future endeavors and minimizing the risk of failure without sacrificing real personal growth. Now that's extraordinary.

Someday I'd like to learn to perform magic tricks. Magicians appear to have super powers in making things appear in, and disappear out, of thin air. As a child I was intrigued of stories about Harry Houdini, who could escape the iron shackles that bound him underwater to emerge to safety. How he did it I did not know. (And I still do not know to this day.) But I wanted the same super powers. And, I could sense that dedicating myself to learning would help me accomplish simple tricks that could mystify others (at least my grand-daughters).

Learning is essential to growth. It is essential to becoming extraordinary. One is not born with super powers. One acquires the super powers to be extraordinary through learning. It enables us to tap into and exploit our talents. David Shenk, author of *The Genius in All of Us*, asserts that it is not giftedness, a genetic gift, but discipline that is essential to achieving brilliance. It "isn't our inadequate genetic assets," but "our inability, so far, to tap into what we already have." "Few of us know our true limits, that the vast majority of us have not even come close to tapping into what scientists call our 'unactualized potential.'"

I said this is personal. It is about me. But, come to think of it, it's about you too. Now that's really personal. Want to tap into your "unactualized potential?" Want to be extraordinary? Learn and learn well!

BOATS & HELICOPTERS:

1. ***Do what you love and love what you do*** – Passion for your subject and your own personal development need to come first. It's not about success versus failure since failure is an essential part of learning. Instead, it's about incrementally moving up the knowledge and skill ladder to be better at what you choose to do. We all need the motivation if we are going to pay the price to achieve our long-term goals. It is a steep price in time, devotion and, yes, even occasional setbacks. I love marketing. I love learning about many subjects such as marketing, leadership, martial arts, relationships, organizational developments, advertising, anatomy and physiology, a host of subjects - including the art of learning itself. This is all the motivation I need to keep pressing ahead.
2. ***Focus on learning and success will follow*** – If we are too results oriented we become fearful of failure. If we become fearful of failure we do not stretch beyond what we know we can safely do. We stop growing. Our capabilities atrophy. And, we become predictable and vulnerable to our competitors. But if we treat each endeavor as a learning opportunity we begin to objectively assess the results and, importantly, the causal factors. We then learn from our experiences and take actions that will lead us to growth and success in subsequent undertakings.
3. ***Understand the discipline of your subject*** – The discipline is the underpinnings of a given subject. Discipline is about the principles, practices and processes that enhance the

likelihood of transforming you from ordinary to extraordinary. When you have the discipline you are free to create something special, very special. Josh Waitzken writes, “The learning principle is to plunge into the detailed mystery of the micro in order to make the macro tick.”

4. ***Make learning a process not an event*** - Learning is a lifelong pursuit. Despite nearly 40-years as a marketing professional I continue to learn. I’m not talking about occasional, infrequent learning. I’m talking about learning on a daily basis. If we want to be extraordinary (and I’m trying, I’m really trying) we have to view learning as a way of life. I remember a quote from a fellow Harvard undergraduate and classmate of the late President John F. Kennedy, who inspired the dream and began the work to put men on the moon. He stated that young Jack was no smarter than he was. But Jack continued to learn after he graduated from Harvard whereas he did not. Learning does not stop at graduation. This is true even if you have a graduate school education or even if you have achieved a doctorate. Not if you want to be extraordinary.
5. ***Be persistent*** – Information is data. Knowledge is what we do with the data. Skill is being able to apply it to make a difference. Getting to the skill level takes persistence in the form of repeated practice. We have to work hard. Malcolm Gladwell in his book *Outliers* says, “people at the top don’t just work harder or even much harder than everyone else. They work much, much harder.” He goes on to quote neurologist Daniel Levitan: “ten thousand hours of practice is required to achieve the level of mastery associated with being a world class expert – in anything.” Gladwell goes on to cite the Beatles and their performing gigs seven days a week until the wee hours of the morning. We know stories of others whose work ethic helps them become extraordinary. How do you get to play Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice.
6. ***Be open*** – We need to be open to learning every day. We should avail ourselves of legitimate learning opportunities both formal and informal. I supplement my martial arts lessons with participation in special seminars along with purchasing and studying instructional DVDs and new books of interest, particularly from practitioners of renown.
7. ***If you want to become an extraordinary brand builder attend the BDNI “Open” Brand Positioning & Communication College*** – Okay, this is a commercial message. But it is not merely self-serving. This program will help you build the requisite skills to be a better brand builder, develop a competitive brand positioning strategy and leadership marketing communications. It is the same program we conduct for Fortune Top 100 Companies through the world. This program consistently receives ratings of “extremely useful” (highest rating) from participants. This Open program will feature five instructors with a total of nearly 200-years of experience with leadership brands. It will focus on “how” to think not “what” to think. We provide you with the discipline. You provide your unique experiences and talents to realize some of that “unactualized potential” and win in the marketplace. For details of the program (specs, agenda, etc.) go on to the website version of this DISPATCHES and [please click here](#).
8. ***Please act now*** - The BDNI “Open” Brand Positioning & Communication College program will be conducted in Kansas City, Missouri, 27 – 29 April. It will be the only “Open” program that we will offer in 2010. Please act now if your self-development is

important to you since program availability is extremely limited. If you are interested call Lori Vandervoort at 800 255-9831 today.

Be extraordinary! Continue learning.

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Just a reminder to those of you who are thinking of attending the upcoming Brand Positioning & Communications College April 27-29, 2010 in Kansas City, Missouri but have not yet registered. Space is very limited and we are quickly approaching a full roster. Please give Lori Vandervoort a call to reserve your spot before it is too late to do so. You can reach her at the Central Division Offices at 800-255-9831 (620-431-0770)



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