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Photo by Hugh Foster

“BE DARING, BE FIRST, BE DIFFERENT”

THE SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

“If you would create something, you must be something.”

~Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

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Steven Holl, one of the world's most innovative architects, draws from buildings of the past to create daring structures that, when viewed, startle and amaze us. When viewing the Zuidas Housing project in Amsterdam, Holland with its elevated gardens, one would believe that his inspiration was the Hanging Gardens of ancient Babylonia. In the new Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri, Holl reaches back to the neoclassical design while adding modern geometric areas. His inspirations have led him to create architectural “wonders of the world.” Would that we all have something or someone to so inspire us? Think of the possibilities, the opportunities, the life we could have, and quite possibly a more humane world.

Inspiration, a noun, refers to any stimulus to creative thought or action, a prompting of something said or written. We all, at one time or another, need to draw upon a source other than ourselves to fulfill our purpose in life. Ralph Waldo Emerson puts it this way, “My chief want in life is someone who shall make me do what I can.” I draw inspiration from many sources such as a journal or newspaper article, a film or video clip, a good book, homily, or quote, but mostly from those with whom I meet along the way. I never fail to find inspiration because I look for it.

Many of you will recall from your European History class the story of Dante Alighieri in 1302. He was exiled from Florence, Italy for taking public funds. As an exile, he began writing *Inferno*, the first part of the *Divine Comedy*. Seven hundred years later, his works are thought to be part of the world's great literature. Inspiring? You bet. One never knows where adversity leads, so the next time you are overwhelmed by what may seem to be unsolvable problems, take a page from Dante's book and get a full dose of inspiration.

We all know people whose lives are one continual hard luck story after another, but still they persevere.

If you are into popular culture, you probably have seen Heather Mills in *Dancing with the Stars*. Mills had her left leg amputated below the knee after being hit by a motorbike in 1993, so how does she end up being spotlighted in a dance contest? Because she refused to quit living; she never gave up hope. Regardless of how you feel about Mills, her story is inspirational; it requires telling.

Several films that never fail to inspire me come to mind. The first is *It's a Wonderful Life* in which George Bailey, played by Jimmy Stewart, meets up with an angel who helps him find a renewed sense of gratefulness. In a more recent true to life film, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, Christopher Gardner, who is down on his luck and homeless with a five year-old son, becomes a successful stockbroker and today is a millionaire. How's that for inspiration?

My search for inspiration often comes from the pages of history. Think about it. What courage it took to leave one's country for a better life elsewhere, to be part of D-Day in WWII, to help break down racial barriers of the past, to be the first man in space, the first to walk on the moon, and to escape totalitarianism into freedom. Those are the stories that continue to inspire. In Time Life's book, *Heroes and Inspirations, Person of the Century*, there is a section on “What Mattered & Why:” Gandhi at the sea to make salt, Rosa Parks on the bus, the student in front of the tank near Tiananmen Square, and others. Jan Smits writes about Gandhi, “Men like him redeem us from a sense of commonplace and futility,” while Keshavan Nair sums it up this way, “With courage you will dare to take risks, have the strength to be compassionate, and the wisdom to be humble. Courage is the foundation of integrity.”

Then we turn to the world of business. Many of today's key business figures have tainted, unethical, and less inspiring reputations to say the least; we won't even touch the field of politics here.

However, most business leaders are honest, forthright and ethical, and their success can only help to motivate us. One such person is Tom Malone, former president of Milliken & Company. He tells the story of being only 150 pounds in college, yet he played football, being constantly beaten up and injured. His answer when asked why he kept doing it was, "If there hadn't been any fans in the stand cheering me on--- my family and friends---I wouldn't have kept on playing and trying so hard. But they were there, so I did." All this after breaking an arm, his neck and his nose six times!

However, for those of you who know me, you must know that my greatest source of inspiration comes from those I know through work or personal relationships. Marie Dodd is one of those individuals. We may not see each other for long periods of time, but when we get together my inspiration level soars. I met Marie in 1982. She became a role model and mentor for me and continues to serve that role today. Marie was vice-president of Ivan Allen, an office supply company in Atlanta. Even though she is "retired," Marie is even busier today as she volunteers with a number of organizations. Marie not just volunteers; she becomes chairman and president of large associations. She is a "go to person!" When I grow weary or anxious about things, I think of Marie and confidently move on to my next challenge.

Another longtime associate and friend, Bill Bonnsetter, has been an on-going source of inspiration for me because I remember when Bill was struggling years ago. He used to say that he wanted to create a distributor network where consultants and trainers could make a good living and be able to "give up their day jobs." Thank you, Bill, for persevering and succeeding and letting us experience the joy of writing checks to the IRS.

Through Bill Bonnsetter, I was introduced to Jim Cecil, one of the most brilliant consultants on the use of nurture marketing for improving organizational sale/revenues. *Nurturing Customer Relationships*, Jim's recently published book, has great ideas that will move the reader to action. Years ago, I attended one of his workshops and can tell you that he helped me immensely, and still does, with positioning my company for success.

We all need inspiration from time to time in both our careers and private lives. As you can see, my inspiration comes from many, many sources. Inspiration is all around us and is not found just in front pages, but can be that one certain person in the office or that person you just met on a cold call. Inspiration is where you find it: you just have to look for it. Find something that will startle and amaze you. Check out my website @ www.competitiveedgeinc.com for books that inspire. Jim Cecil's book is there along with my quotation book, *The Journey, Quotes to Keep Your Boat Afloat*. A future column will deal with "Now That I'm Inspired, What Do I Do Next?"

"All the inspiration I ever needed was a phone call from a producer." ~Cole Porter, musician

What Judy is Reading

Why all the hype with the latest trendy book, *The Secret*, which seems to be all over the talk shows? In this book, Rhonda Byrne shares what she learned from twenty-four various "modern day practitioners" who each teach her their "secret" for a successful life which appears to be based mainly on the acquisition of wealth. For Byrne, this book has become a marketer's dream and will most likely bring her great material worth. However, most of us have known her "secret" for years; there is nothing new in this book. For me, the **Secret to Happiness** is found in a small booklet called *Good Stuff*, 2005. It is attributed to "Anonymous," who sums it all up in much less space and hype than in the two hundred pages of Byrne's book. Here it is: **Forget. Apologize. Admit errors. Avoid mistakes. Listen to advice. Keep your temper. Shoulder the blame. Make the best of things. Maintain high standards. Think first and act accordingly. Put the needs of others before your own. Forgive.**

That, friends, is the secret that I share with you today. Sounds like good advice to me. And it didn't cost \$23.95! My apologies to you – the title of this column should read, **What Judy is Not Reading**. Incidentally, I am not the only one who has panned this book.

Update on Employee Retention

In a recent study of 700 people from various industries, Wayne Hochwarter of Florida State University set out to validate that employees don't leave their jobs, they leave their bosses, and this is what he learned:

- 39% indicated that their superiors failed to keep their word
- 37% said they did not receive credit when due
- 31% reported that their supervisors ignored them at some time in the past year
- 27% received negative comments about them from their manager.
- 24% said that their supervisor invaded their privacy.
- 23% reported that their superior blames others for their mistakes.

For help with reducing turnovers or measuring workforce engagement in your organization, contact us at www.competitiveedgeinc.com and learn about our **Work Expectations Profile**.

The Latest on Buzzwords

Just want to keep you posted on the latest fun words from BuzzWhack.com:

Deja poo: The feeling that you've stepped in this bull before.

Prairie dogging: A modern office phenomenon that occurs when workers simultaneously pop their heads up out of the cubicles to see what's going on

DWT: Driving while text messaging.

Adminisphere: The upper levels of management where big, impractical, and counterproductive decisions are made.

Clockroaches: Employees who spend most of their day watching the clock-instead of doing their jobs.

Bobbleheading: The mass nod of agreement by participants in a meeting of comments made by the boss even though most have no idea what he/she said.

"Once inspired, one seeks to inspire."
Nathaniel Summers

"We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men."
Herman Melville

Upcoming Events

Train the Trainer Program

July 16, 2007 through July 18, 2007

The Hampton Inn, Peachtree City, GA

Your investment for all three days is \$1195.00

Please register by July 2, 2007. A cancellation fee will be charged if you cancel after July 8th for other than emergency situations. Register early as these classes fill quickly and we often have a waiting list.

DISC CLUES AVAILABLE

DISC Clues is an informative and fun way to keep the four DISC behavioral styles foremost in your mind. They are sent on a weekly basis via email and are provided free to our valued clients. If you would like to receive these quick and fun reminders, contact us at judy@competitiveedgeinc.com or 770-487-6460.

FYI

The U.S. Census Bureau reports since 1976, CEO compensation has risen 223% in inflation-adjusted terms, while real wages for American workers increased a mere 5%.

Employer Nightmares...

- The U.S. Dept. of Labor finds that drug users are absent from work on an average of five days per month because of their addiction.
- ADP Screening and Selection Service found that in 2.6M background checks in 2001, 44 % of applicants lied about their work histories, 41% lied about their education, and 23% falsified credentials or licenses.

If you are experiencing any of these problems, **Competitive Edge, Inc.** can help. Please visit our website @ www.competitiveedgeinc.com and click under **Products** for the **Counterproductive Behavior Index** assessment which makes the screening process easy and accurate.