

# ***LeaderPerfect Newsletter***

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## **Blazing Your Own Trail**

by Dr. Mike Armour

Looking back, we can all remember critical forks in the road — life-changing moments when two paths diverged on the road before us. Each inviting. Each leading to a different destiny. And we could choose only one. The other would be left behind, perhaps forever.

When we tell our life story, it's often a chronicle of paths pursued and paths not taken. True greatness, we tend to believe, comes from choosing paths wisely, building one success upon another.

What distinguishes true greatness, however, is not so much choosing the right path. Rather it comes from blazing the right trail. A new trail. Embarking on a direction heretofore unexplored.

### **Becoming A Trail-Blazer**

Ralph Waldo Emerson encapsulated this idea magnificently in a quote often heard in leadership development circles: "Do not go where the path may lead," Emerson said. "Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

Well-worn paths are tempting. They travel easily. Mile markers and signposts are frequent. And should moments of confusion arise, friendly guides are everywhere to keep you headed in the right direction. There are hazards along the way, to be sure. But they are usually well-known and generally manageable.

But when we leave the beaten path and strike off into uncharted forests — now, that's a different matter. The going is rarely easy. We have to set our own course, our own tempo. We have to become our own navigator and guide. And success is hardly assured.

In fact, our foray into the forest may occasionally land us squarely in a bramble patch. Snagged on every side, it's all we can do to extricate ourselves and get back on course.

But even bramble patches are valuable learning experiences. They make us wiser trail blazers. How unfortunate the soul who, once caught in the brambles, beats a hasty retreat to the well-traveled path and vows never to leave it again.

What he or she will find, once back on the beaten path, is safety and predictability. But lost is the unparalleled fulfillment found only on the trail you chart for yourself.

## Trailblazers And Progress

No revolutionary contributions to human progress were made on the well-worn paths. No pioneering new businesses. No awe-inspiring achievements. No breakthroughs in human consciousness. The greatest human advances, both personally and collectively, tend to occur somewhere off the beaten path.

Now, none of this is meant to dismiss or belittle well-traveled roads. We all need them. No one can be a trailblazer 100 per cent of the time, in every avenue of life. But sadly, many people spend their entire lives without ever taking a stab at blazing a new trail.

## Venturing Off The Beaten Path

What about you? Has the allure of the well-worn path become seductive? Has it become so comfortable that you're reluctant to leave it? Even occasionally? Even once?

Life can be rewarding on the well-traveled road. It can even be fulfilling. But to discover what you're really made of, to discover things you never knew about yourself, do some trail-blazing.

I can't tell you where it will take you. But when you get there, I'll bet you look back and call it one of the greatest adventures you've ever had.

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