

LeaderPerfect Newsletter

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Unusable Thens

by Dr. Mike Armour

In the early 1970s Xerox machines were large, bulky, extremely expensive, and seen only in the largest corporations. The marketing gurus at Xerox faced a formidable challenge to convince smaller businesses to invest in their product.

Since the gurus couldn't use price to sell their machines, they opted to market them as time-savers. The result was a series of clever ads, each one built around the concept of time.

One advertisement in particular caught my eye. It was a full-page display in *The Wall Street Journal*. Almost the entire page was covered by a huge hourglass, with sand piling up rapidly in the lower chamber. When you looked more closely at the ad, however, you noticed something unusual about the sand.

The sand in the top of the hourglass consisted of hundreds of tiny copies of the word "now." Conversely, the sand piling up in the bottom of the glass was a mass of equally tiny "thens." The caption at the bottom of the page read, "Unused nows become unusable thens."

Capturing the Moment

The image of that hourglass and that intriguing slogan have served me well over the years. When I've tended to procrastinate and opt for laziness, that hourglass filling up with "unusable thens" often spurs me back into action. And lately I've fallen back on that image regularly to keep me on task with what's truly important in my life.

Maybe I'm thinking more about those unusable "thens" of late because I happen to turn 60 this month. A lot of sand has piled up in the bottom of the hourglass. And it would be easy to become fixated on all the "thens" that can never be recaptured.

But to be honest, I've been more focused on the "nows" still waiting to be used. Last month I renamed and revamped my company to capture the very promising future direction my business has been going. Lots of exciting "nows" are ripe for the seizing. And September saw the birth of my first grandchild. What a WONDERFUL "now" to enjoy.

Measures of Age

Thirty years ago I dreamed of feeling youthful and excited about life at 60. But I never imagined that I would feel this youthful and alive.

I've profited along the way from the example of others who taught me that age is never measured by the number of "thens" piled up in your hourglass. Age is measured by how much you are thrilled and enthusiastic about the "nows" still to come.

Some people remain young at 85, I've noticed. Others are old at 40.

I, for one, intend to stay young. To enjoy every remaining "now," however many there may be. And I pray that there will be lots of them.

Piling Up Memories

The ever-mounting pile of "thens" is not an altogether bad thing. The Xerox ad was misleading when it says they are unusable. I use them all the time. Many of those "thens" are woven around rich memories of friendship, service, and accomplishment. When I recall such memorable "thens," I feel younger than ever. My spirit soars. And I do like soaring.

So to soar even higher, I intend to build up as many memorable "thens" as possible. I intend to use them often as I recall the special joy they brought into my life.

In fact, I need to bring this issue to a close. I just noticed another "now," rich in potential, about to fall into the neck of the hourglass. I've got to grab it before it slips away, because it really looks like a good one!!

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