

LeaderPerfect Newsletter

September 1, 2002

Tired Of Getting What You Don't Want?

by Dr. Mike Armour

I grew up in Dairy Queen country. The company's trademark, a red oval with "DQ" blazoned across it, was a familiar sign along the roads of my youth. It promised a pleasurable treat for those who dropped in.

Even if you don't live in Dairy Queen country, you have a local DQ. And you probably visit it quite often. But it's not a Dairy Queen. It's your Dissatisfaction Quotient.

Your DQ measures your level of dissatisfaction in one or more areas of life. The greater your DQ, the more likely your desire for change. Dissatisfaction is a goad. It spurs us into action. It steels our resolve to make life better. So don't ignore your dissatisfaction. Relish it. Dig into it, like a sundae at Dairy Queen. Find out what's at the bottom of the DQ dish. Probe deeper and deeper, until you discover the root of your dissatisfaction.

Spawning Creativity

Moments of dissatisfaction brim with possibility. The possibility of breaking the old molds. The possibility of new peak achievements. The possibility of creating something special, even extraordinary. Dissatisfaction is the spawning ground of creativity.

But not necessarily. It's easy to grumble about being dissatisfied, while doing nothing about it. Or to make half-hearted efforts at improving ourselves, only to fall short of the promise we might have attained.

If you're willing to settle for grumbling and half-heartedness, don't bother to read on. Save yourself the energy. On the other hand, if you're ready to turn dissatisfaction into an action plan, here's how to begin.

Picturing What You Want

First, pick an area of your life with a high DQ. Perhaps it's something about your career. Or a vital relationship. Or unfulfilled personal goals. Next, identify what leads to your dissatisfaction. Be as specific as possible. Don't settle for generalities like, "I don't feel fulfilled" or "I don't have enough money." Dig deeper. "I don't feel fulfilled because I'm missing _____." Or, "I don't have enough money to _____." Fill in the blanks.

Then ask yourself, "What is it I genuinely want in place of what I'm missing?" Again, be specific. Imagine yourself behind a camera at some point in the future, taking a picture of a "totally thrilled you," having what you truly want. Notice what you see through the view finder.

Once the picture starts taking shape, continue to refine it. Make it as clear and distinct as you can. Add color and detail to it. Enlarge it. Set it in motion and note the sounds that you will be hearing as you find new satisfaction. The goal is to play with the picture until you make it as compelling and desirable as possible.

Steering Where You Want To Go

Why all this playing with pictures and sounds? To give your desire for change something to shoot for. Effective change calls for an unambiguous vision of what we desire. Dissatisfaction alone will not give us that. Dissatisfaction sets our focus on what we *don't* want. It never gives us a crisp image of what we *want*.

We have a propensity, it seems, to be much clearer about what we don't want than about what we want. Yet, things really need to be the other way around. We need the greatest clarity on what we *want*. Otherwise, we limit the "steering power" of the unconscious mind.

As a driver you know this "steering power" firsthand. Have you ever become focused on something off the roadway (perhaps an intriguing billboard), only to realize that your car was drifting in that direction? The unconscious mind steers us toward the pictures we place before it.

Thus, if we only ply the unconscious mind with pictures of what we *don't* want, it tends to steer us in that direction. *We keep getting what we don't want.* "

"I don't want to be fat," we say, conjuring up an overweight picture of ourselves. Then we find ourselves stopping impulsively at the refrigerator, improvising a snack we know we don't really need. Why? Because the unconscious mind is steering us toward the picture we've put before it.

So give your unconscious mind strong, positive images to work with. Bring clarity to your definition of what you want. Picture it. Enhance the picture. Make it so familiar that you can call it to mind in an instant.

This exercise alone will start you in the direction of what you genuinely want. And in our next newsletter we'll explore this topic further.

A Retrospective on Vietnam

Can not knowing what you want be costly? Yep!! In a big way. In my judgment, one of America's greatest disasters grew out of this very failure.

At the outset of the Second World War, when the Japanese attacked Indochina, the French colonial government put up only token resistance. Indochina fell almost without a shot. President Franklin Roosevelt was outraged. He vowed that Indochina would never again return to France.

By the end of the war, Harry Truman was in the White House. Many around him feared that the Chinese (who took the formal Japanese surrender in Hanoi) would annex Indochina. Washington set out to thwart that possibility.

Meanwhile, Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh had already set up a provisional government in Indochina, which did not particularly please Truman, either. (As the French moved back in, Truman looked the other way because he wanted Ho Chi Minh in power even less than he wanted the French in power.)

Later, at a conference called to resolve the "Indochina question," U. S. Secretary of State George Marshall sent a striking one-line cable to the American negotiator at the conference, who had wired home for instructions. "Frankly," said Marshall, "we have no new suggestions to make, but none of the present alternatives is acceptable."

In other words, Marshall, heralded for his visionary reconstruction of Europe at the end of the Second World, had no vision for Indochina. He did not know what he wanted. Only what he didn't want.

From 1940 forward, American policy in Indochina evolved through several stages, which could be summarized as:

1. Do whatever it takes to keep the French out.
2. Do whatever it takes to keep the Chinese out.
3. Do whatever it takes to keep the Viet Minh out.
4. Do whatever it takes to keep the Viet Cong out.

At every step of the way we were clear on what we didn't want. We never developed equal clarity on what we wanted, and the consequence was deadly.

© 2002, MCA Professional Services Group, LLC

This article may be posted to your web site so long as all copyright notices are preserved, along with an associated link to www.leaderperfect.com. You are also free to circulate this document in hard-copy form so long as the copyright statement and this notice remain attached.