
----- WHAT'S UP, DOC? -----

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"Creating Leadership Solutions for Profit and Growth"

THIS MONTH'S THEME: PERSISTENCE IN LIFE AND WORK

"Rome wasn't built in a day," my immigrant grandfather often said. Okay, he wasn't original, but he was right. Another friend of mine used to say, "Anything worth building is worth building . . . slowly." Though we live in a time that emphasizes speed, quick turnaround, life in Internet time, etc., it still seems that quality requires patience, perfection takes practice, and the things we value most require attention, care and persistence. Whether we are raising children, building friendships, building organizations or building a career, persistence is often the thing we value least in today's quick turnaround age, and the thing we often need the most. This month's issue offers some thoughts on persistence, its importance and its relation to success.

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THIS MONTH'S QUOTES: all from Lucille Ball

"One of the things I learned the hard way was that it doesn't pay to get discouraged. Keeping busy and making optimism a way of life can restore faith in yourself."

"I don't know anything about luck. I've never banked on it, and I'm afraid of people who do. Luck to me is something else: hard work and realizing what is opportunity and what isn't."

"I'm not funny. What I am is brave." (some thoughts on what she actually meant by this at the end of this newsletter)

1. CASE STUDY: THE CAREER OF LUCILLE BALL

Even being funny takes persistent effort. Lucille Ball was born in 1911, and when she was four, her father died. Her mother remarried, and both parents sternly disciplined young, headstrong Lucy.

Lucy began working in her early teens. She led a blind man around her home town in upstate New York. She also sold soap, poured sodas at a local drugstore, sold dresses in a shop and also sold hot dogs at an amusement park. When she was fifteen, she staged an amateur show of a play called “Charley’s Aunt,” in which she played the male lead, and collected twenty-five dollars profit for her ninth grade class.

Not everyone was sold on her talent, however. Later that year, she went to New York City to an acting school, where after a year her instructors concluded she had no talent and sent her packing. With her mother’s support, Lucy enrolled in another school and got a job in the chorus of a traveling acting troupe – only to be fired five weeks into her first rehearsal schedule.

Never one to quit, Lucy got another traveling acting job and then became a model for a women’s clothing brand, Hattie Carnegie. Her career progress was again stymied, however, by debilitating arthritis, which forced her to endure many months in the hospital before relearning to walk. Imagine that: the woman later to become renowned for her physical comedy had to learn to walk all over again as a young adult. The work paid off, and she got another modeling job, this time as a national model for Chesterfield cigarettes on billboards across America.

As a result of her billboard exposure, Lucy was given a last minute slot in a Sam Goldwyn film as one of twelve women to comprise the “Goldwyn Girls,” making her film debut in 1934. The job was short-lived, as Columbia Pictures made cutbacks of stock players shortly thereafter, and Lucy got the axe.

Ever the resourceful one, Lucy parlayed some contacts into another spot as an extra at RKO Studios, where she impressed executives enough to earn an individual contract for seven years to appear in what would become a string of B-movies. Her most notable appearance was in “Stage Door,” with Ginger Rogers and Katherine Hepburn (1937).

Flush with success and a burgeoning career, Lucy was set to take on a role in a Broadway production called “Too Many Girls,” but she slipped on the

ice while skating as part of an untreated promotional event, and was hurt badly enough to miss out on the show. Once able to get around again, Lucy went to see the show, and went slack-jawed and bug-eyed with one look at the show's star, Desi Arnaz. But she didn't get to meet him – not yet.

In 1940, RKO set about making a film version of “Too Many Girls,” starring Desi Arnaz and Lucy. Lucy made the most of her introduction to her new co-star, and Desi himself was quoted as saying, “What a hunk of woman!” They eloped in November of 1940.

By now, you get the picture – Lucy's professional rise was uneven and fraught with setbacks. Her marriage to Desi Arnaz was rocky, and she suffered two miscarriages before having two children. She even found herself briefly on Senator Joe McCarthy's blacklist during the red scares of the 1950's.

Television studios originally rejected the idea for “I Love Lucy” because they did not want Desi on the show. Stubbornly, Lucy took their husband-and-wife situation comedy act on the road, produced her own TV pilot, and ended up not only selling the show, but eventually creating Desilu Studios on the ashes (and the real estate) of the by now bankrupt RKO Studios. Under her subsequent guidance, Desilu launched such well-known television shows as Star Trek, Mission Impossible and The Untouchables.

Lucy and Desi ultimately divorced in 1960, and Lucy bought out Desi's 50% share of Desilu for \$3 million, with the help of a loan. In 1967, she sold Desilu for \$17 million.

Even if Lucy' family life and later personal life were sometimes less than idyllic, in her career she was a model of persistence in the face of adversity. Lucille Ball broke ground as a performer, as the unchallenged queen of television comedy and as woman in business. She even portrayed the first (gasp!) pregnant woman on national television. She married comedian Gary Morton in 1961, and ultimately died during heart surgery in 1989. Lucille Ball was 78 years old.

2. PERSISTENCE IN YOUR LIFE

PERSISTENCE IN FAMILY LIFE

I spoke with a client recently, the mother of a teenage daughter. She told me how, when she saw a bumper sticker that said, “Hire a Teenager –

While They Still Know It All!,” she laughed so hard she swerved and nearly jumped the curb. It takes persistence to raise a child – from the nightly feedings and diaper changings, to the patience to explore their worlds and hear their tales of triumph and loss when young, to the patience to remember whatever you liked about them in the first place as they question and test everything during their teenage years! For many of us in dual earner homes, a long day at work can make it even tougher sometimes to pay attention to family members’ needs. It takes persistence to step back, laugh and keep the rough spots of family life, marriage or kids’ behavior in perspective. If the unspoken mission of a family is to support the lives, health and growth of all its members, then persistence and a bit of perspective go a long way for all involved. Like Ms. Ball, some of us may experience real troubles and challenges on the home front, but persistence in caring and understanding are required by parents children and spouses alike.

PERSISTENCE IN BUSINESS

Some of us are nuts enough to start our own businesses, so we know that it takes a lot of persistence and nerve to keep plugging away through the tough, early years. But even for the majority of us who work in larger organizations also know from experience that, to accomplish anything of merit in a larger organization, it takes hard work, persistence and a willingness to adjust while sticking to a larger mission. Research over the last decades into the elements that make the best, most successful companies what they are highlights the importance of persistence. Books like “Good to Great” and “Built To Last” come to mind. Especially now, during some tough economic times, it takes persistence to “do the right things right,” as Peter Drucker used to say, when there seems to be less immediate reward from the marketplace. But the little things matter, day after day, and staying focused will help the best organizations take full advantage of the return to more prosperous times, whenever they may come.

PERSISTENCE IN A CAREER

The Lucille Ball story in the first half of this newsletter certainly makes the point. Of course, it’s easy to see in retrospect, but Lucy was meant to be a performer – even if her first acting instructors thought she had no talent. She may not have been a strong dramatic actress or singer for a chorus, but she knew she belonged on a stage, and ultimately found it through a little electronic box that did not even exist when she’d been fired from her first acting job. No doubt, she could not see how her drive and ability would ultimately manifest themselves, but she kept moving forward, undeterred, always doing the next right thing, and ultimately found her niche. There are many people with talent who lack persistence, who ultimately settle into work that does not suit or please them, and subsequently they don’t perform to their potential. Leaner job markets

like the current one may make the fulfillment of a career dream take longer, but a lack of persistence makes it take much longer still: never is a very long time.

PERSISTENCE IN FRIENDSHIP

I read an article once that said we spend a lot of time glorifying romantic love in our culture – in movies and songs and so on – and less time recognizing the value and pleasure that come from long term, reliable friendships. Romantic love has its place, to be sure, and certainly we recognize that stable romantic relationships require more than just the spark of initial attraction to survive, though I tend to agree that we may fail to appreciate the value of solid, authentic friendships that last a long time. I know many people who are fortunate to have and maintain real friendships from childhood, high school or college years. One test of these kinds of friendship is that they can survive extended periods without contact, and if the chips are down for one person, or simply when contact resumes, it is as if no time has passed at all. For a friendship to reach that level, both people likely would have been together through many ups and downs in the past. Still, while these friendships can survive extended periods of relative neglect, why should they? Call an old friend this month, and make a point to stay in touch more often. Persistence in such friendships becomes its own reward.

3. RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND FILMS

BOOK: "The Calvin and Hobbes Tenth Anniversary Book," by Bill Watterson, Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City, 1995.

After writing that little ode to friendship above, I looked over at my bookshelf and this title jumped out at me. Am I the only one out there who misses Calvin and Hobbes? Not only did Calvin's relationship with his stuffed tiger portray many of the elements of the kind of friendship written of above. . . but the strip was just plain funny as heck! A client bought me a commemorative Calvin and Hobbes title after the successful completion of a project a couple of years ago – the team members had gotten to know me, and knew it would make the perfect gift. Since I have no burning passion for any new business titles this month, the recommendation you get is. . . Calvin and Hobbes.

FILMS: "Winged Migration," in select theaters

This month I'm going to go out on a limb and recommend a film I have not yet seen. This one's a sleeper, a documentary of what is being called exquisite photography of migrating birds in flight. Sounds. . . flighty, right? I suppose, but reviewers I trust are saying great things about it, even if it has so far only reached a few theaters in some major U. S. cities. Allow me to quote from the Wall Street Journal review for a sampling of opinion: "Winged Migration redefines the notion of in-flight movies, and of bird's-eye views. A magnificent documentary that flies us along with migratory birds on their intercontinental travels, . . . we're able to sense, as never before, what these ceaseless migrations represent: not just the abstract beauty of formation flight, but the staggering effort expended by individual birds, wing-beat by wing-beat, as they traverse vast distances. . . (This) documentary celebrates a part of the planet's life that usually goes unsung, though not unseen: great swarms of flapping creatures that sometimes coalesce into one undulating organism, or single birds with wings outstretched, navigating ancient passages across invisible seas." I'll see it when it arrives here in Washington, D. C. – it sounds like something different and intriguing to me. Keep an eye out for it in your area. To read more reviews, click [here](#).

4. CHUCKLES

A woman went to her Health Maintenance Organization. After about 15 minutes with one of the new doctors, she went screaming down the hall. Another doctor stopped and asked her what the problem was and she explained.

The second doctor went back to the first and said, "What's the matter with you? Mrs. Terry is 63 years old. She has four grown children and seven grandchildren and you told her she was pregnant?"

The new doctor simply smiled and said,

"Cured her hiccups though, didn't it?"

5. BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT

Forthcoming Book:

ChangeRx: Prescriptions for Successful Change Planning and Implementation - A Practical Guide for Leaders, by A. J. Schuler, Psy. D.

Anticipated for publication in the Fall of 2003, "ChangeRx" will be the only practical guide of its kind to walk change leaders through the actual process of designing and implementing a successful change campaign. The book, designed and formatted as an easily accessible workbook, will be an ideal resource for students of management, executives and leaders of organizations large and small, both in the profit and non-profit sectors.

To be placed on the notification list - to learn right away when ChangeRx" will become available - simply email me at AJ@SchulerSolutions.com with the subject heading, "ChangeRx." By doing so, you will have the opportunity to purchase "ChangeRx" at 20% off the retail price. You will also be able to receive free sample text online once the content becomes available. Don't miss this chance to get in on a good thing - "ChangeRx" is destined to become a "cult classic" among leaders of change and required reading for the executive teams of large organizations under transition.

6. ABOUT DR. SCHULER

A. J. Schuler, Psy. D., an expert on leadership and organizational change, provides consulting services, keynote presentations and seminars for clients companies. His trademark is highly personalized service that leads to measurable increases in productivity, profit and growth.

Dr. Schuler, President of Schuler Solutions, Inc., has served diverse organizations in the private and public sectors, including The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, Sony Development, Nomura Securities and the Executive Office for Immigration Review.

A graduate of the Wharton School of Business, Dr. Schuler has successfully led the profitable growth of a dynamic, international consulting firm while serving as Operations Director, and has successfully coached over five hundred CEO's and corporate executives.

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“Make each day your masterpiece.” -- John Wooden

P.S. – For those of you curious about that Lucille Ball quote at the top, where she said, "I'm not funny. What I am is brave." . . . What she meant was she was not a classic joke teller or stand up comedian, like, for example, her contemporary, Bob Hope. Instead, she was a comedic character actress who relied on timing and the tension of situations created by her characters to get laughs, and then more intense laughs, as she made those situations progressively more extreme. And along the way, she put herself into more or less humiliating circumstances (stuffing her face with chocolate, in one famous scene) for the sake of the laugh. That was what she meant by her bravery – her willingness to take risks and appear as a fool for the sake of the audience. But those of us who have looked at the

path she took to reach career success can see her bravery in other parts of her life, not just in her approach to comedy. A brief musical tribute to Lucille Ball can be found [here](#) – as your nostalgic “reward” for reading this far! “See” you next month – forward this issue to a friend and expand our subscriber list!