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# MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES

## Learning

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### From the Editor

This year, more than ever, fall makes me think of the inevitability of change.

This year, it goes beyond the drop in temperature and the fiery orange in the trees.

This year, my eldest “child” — I suppose I can’t really call him that anymore! — moved away to university.

This has been perhaps the biggest, most poignant reminder of the fleeting nature of time that I have ever had to confront. I’ve known for years that it was coming, haven’t I, and yet I was completely unprepared for that U-Haul taking my son and his limited belongings down the road, then around the corner and out of my sight.

This year, I realized that change comes to everyone. And when it affects you personally — and profoundly — you can never be as prepared as you need to be.

Helping organizations anticipate and adapt to change objectively and intelligently is one of the strengths of LIVE Consultants. Because sometimes when it’s up close and personal, you can’t see the beauty of the vibrant and colourful **new** forest for the trees!

*Marilyn Baetz, editor*

### About the Author and the Article

They’re all around us.

People talking. Sometimes we listen, but usually we don’t. And that’s a tragedy. Because every single person with whom we come in contact, regardless of age, gender, background, or walk of life, has accumulated tremendous knowledge about life. In casual conversation, they probably don’t even notice their own flashes of brilliance.

If you listen, you’ll see that literally everyone has valuable insights, perspectives, and experiences to share. If you listen, you’ll hear pearls of wisdom and gems of truth and see that people you’ve never taken much notice of before are actually diamonds in the rough.

If you listen, you will **learn**.

Author Stephen Baetz, a principal of LIVE Consultants Inc., would like to introduce you to the elderly gentleman you hurried past on your way to work this morning. He has a few things he’d like to say to you.



*Stephen Baetz*

# Time To Learn

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Gotta minute?

Whad a question eh?  
Who doesn't have a minute?

You're running out of time?

Not me.  
I got all the time I want  
and I got all the time there is.  
24 a day,  
168 a week,  
8736 a year.  
For some folks, that's never enough.  
They got all the time there is,  
and they want more.

For the last 10 years,  
since I retired,  
I've watched people wherever I am.  
I have to laugh.  
Even when folks are on time  
they act like they're behind time ...  
so they run to catch up ...  
as if they could catch  
a fleeting minute.  
And if any of them ever have  
time on their hands  
they credit themselves for time *well* spent.  
Others try to save time,  
manage time,  
make time ...  
Almost as if they can  
*make it*,  
*save it*, and  
*spend it*  
some time in the future.

Go figure ...  
d'ya suppose when they're about to die  
all those people who've spent their lives saving  
time  
can stop the grim reaper  
with a line like,  
"Not yet fella.  
By my calculation I've saved  
17,472 hours in my life,  
so back off for another 2 years."  
Not likely.

The truth is you can't save time  
or manage time,  
or even lose time.  
Impossible.  
Most you can do,  
I suppose,  
is manage what you do  
in the time there is.  
Of course, if you make time the villan  
for the problems you have  
you don't have to look  
at yourself and what you're doing.

Here's the one  
that amuses me the most.  
People tell me they don't have  
time to learn,  
they're just too busy.  
8736 of busy-ness.  
They figure that learning  
is a leisure time activity —  
not something a person would do  
if they're busy working  
or doing chores.  
It's almost like  
learning happens separate  
from what you're doing,  
not a part of it.  
Perhaps that comes from thinking  
that school is where you learn  
and then you graduate  
to the real world  
where you don't.  
Maybe that's why some people  
don't seem to learn from their experience.

Well, nonetheless.

It does raise the question though  
about how we learn and even  
how we learn from experience.

Willard,  
that's my next door neighbour,  
seems to be one of those people  
who can't learn  
from what's happening to him.  
He's a fussy fella,  
pernickety,

as systematic as a tax audit  
in everything he does.  
Everything has its place,  
everything in its place.  
His apartment looks  
like nobody lives there.  
When his grandchildren come to visit  
he follows behind them  
picking up  
like a clown behind horses  
in a Labour Day parade.  
To kids, it's a game.  
Drop more, make a mess,  
watch Grandpa Willy go.  
They love the game,  
Willard doesn't.  
He can't wait to see them go  
and then feels guilty  
because he wanted them out.  
Two weeks later  
he's back on the phone  
begging them to come for  
yet another visit,  
which he'll dread.  
Dreadlock, Holy Dreadlock ...  
a life-time game the whole family plays.

So why doesn't Willard learn?

My hunch is that he's buried  
the question why.

Yes, that's it.  
You can't learn how to learn  
until you've turned the curiosity button  
to a full 10.  
Willard ...  
I'm just using him as an example,  
I really mean everybody ...  
has got to ask why of everything —  
why he feels the way he does,  
why he needs to have order,  
why he wants the problems he has,  
why he wants to relate to  
his grandchildren this way,  
why ... why ... why?

I figure if you ask that question,  
you can figure out

what you don't know.  
Once you know what you don't know  
you're a leg up.

I had a boss one time  
who used to say,  
"If your guts ain't churnin'  
you ain't learnin'."  
Which was just his way of saying  
that if you're not mildly anxious  
about what you don't know  
you're not going to be open  
to learning a darn thing.

But here's a key —  
well at least it is for me —  
you have to ask that question  
*all of the time*,  
when you're standing right there  
knee deep in experience.  
'Cause if you don't,  
you'll be on to the next  
experience, crisis, whatever,  
and you become numb  
to what's just happened.

Here's the last thing,  
if you've got another minute?  
If you want to learn how to learn  
you have to believe in using  
other people's experience.  
I'm not going to live long enough  
to make enough mistakes  
to get wise in the school of hard knocks.  
So I let others make a few for me.  
Some people think you can only  
know something  
if you've done it yourself.  
What a foolish argument!  
That means you have to be a pig  
to know pork.  
Surely, we can learn  
from other people's experiences.

I said a minute, didn't I.  
I lied.  
Learning is a lifetime.  
Guess I should have asked,  
"Got a life?"

# Education Plan

There are two major challenges facing Human Resource Development professionals:

- ensuring buy-in from both senior management and program participants, and
- focusing available resources.

Meet those challenges and everything else seems easy!

Our education planning process can help you do just that.

The starting point is a series of interviews with the leadership of the organization to identify the current and emerging goals, strategies, and values of the organization as well as what skills, attitudes, and knowledges they feel people will need in the future.

This data is coupled with results from a needs analysis survey of the participants themselves. Both pieces of input form the foundation for planning by a Policy and Strategy Group.

The carefully researched plan that evolves targets precisely how development dollars should be invested. Best of all, this plan has commitment.

**For more information about our services, contact us at (519) 664-2213.**