

The Impossible Dream

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In the *Man of La Mancha* Don Quixote dreams of being a brave knight who rides a great steed (horse) to fight for what is right. That dream turned into a vision where he and his squire, Sancho Panza, were fighting dragons and saving fair damsels in distress. The vision spurred him into action. Although his dragon may have been a windmill, with its sails whirling, he mistakes it for a four-armed giant and his fair-haired damsel turns out to be a roadside inn's serving wench and part-time prostitute, Aldonza. As they sang from *Man of La Mancha*:

*To dream the impossible dream
To fight the unbeatable foe
To bear with unbearable sorrow
To run where the brave dare not go*

*To right the unrightable wrong
To love pure and chaste from afar
To try when your arms are too weary
To reach the unreachable star*

*This is my quest
To follow that star
No matter how hopeless
No matter how far*

*To fight for the right
Without question or pause
To be willing to march into Hell
For a heavenly cause*

*And I know if I'll only be true
To this glorious quest
That my heart will lie peaceful and calm
When I'm laid to my rest*

*And the world will be better for this
That one man, scorned and covered with scars
Still strove with his last ounce of courage
To reach the unreachable star*

But he took action based upon his dream that produced results; he became more than he was and added value to the people he came in contact with.

Gloria Steimen, American writer from the 1930s, stated: “Without leaps of imagination or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning.”

We talk a lot about having visions and documenting them, but even before we have a vision, we dream of what could be and that is the stimulus that creates our visions. The ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, dreamed of making his Emirates not dependent on oil for he realized that some time in the future, the oil supply would dry out. He dreamed of castles built on sand, a city that would be the heart of Middle East business.

We all have dreams; as individuals, most of us have four really big dreams:

- We dream of getting our first car – that first car makes us independent. We no longer have to wait for our parents to take us places. We have been given our freedom. It may not be the best or fastest car, but it is ours and we love it.
- We dream of finding our spouse – we all look for and need someone who we can share our successes and failures with, to share our lives and build a future with. We all want someone who we can look into his/her eyes and know that he/she will care and will continue to care even if we make errors and have

failures. We look for someone who fifty years from when you met them, still looks at you with the same loving and caring as they did on your wedding day.

This is the most important decision you will make in your life. If you don't have good enough ability to select a spouse that you can make a life with, how can you hope to make good business decisions?

- We dream of owning our own home – everyone dreams of having his/her own home. It may be a vine-covered cottage near a stream or a penthouse on top of a building with hinges on chimneys for clouds to pass by. It is the place where you and your spouse are safe from the rest of the world, where you can be yourself and raise your family.
- And we dream of having children. It is amazing how much you can love these little ones and how their lives become such an integral part of your life. They become your legacy, the part of you that lives on after you have passed away.

The question is, “Are you

- a dreamer
- or a dream-breaker
- or a dream-maker?”

Too many of us are just dreamers; we are day dreamers - we dream and put off to the tomorrow doing something about it. We tell our selves we need to stay with reality. Too many of the managers are dream-breakers. We all seem to want to play the devil's advocate. Instead of trying to help develop the dream, we look at all the negative parts of

the dream and try to break it down. Too few of us become the angel's advocate –the ones who help people capture their dreams, help them build upon it, and helps them take that dream and make it a reality.

As George Bernard Shaw stated, “You see things and say ‘Why?’; but I dream things that never were and I say ‘Why not?’”

Far too few of us are dream-makers. People like John F. Kennedy, who said “Why Not”? and then makes it happen.

I have a unique way of how to categorize people. I think of them as three different food items that change after put into boiling water. (The boiling water simulates the pressure we all face in our daily life.)

- ❑ Carrot people – when you get a raw carrot, it is hard, firm and crispy. You put it into boiling water (that simulates the turmoil that we live in) and it comes out limp and a side dish, not the main course on any dinner table. Carrot people go through life as follows, doing what they have to do to get by, nothing more.
- ❑ Egg people – an egg in its raw state is almost the perfect package, hard on the outside and soft on the inside. It contains life-giving substance. Put it into boiling water and it becomes hard-boiled all the way through. We have lots of hard-boiled people, those who care about themselves and no body else. They look out for themselves and take advantage of other people; they have completely lost their compassion. They are people who everything is me – me – me, not we – we – we.

☐ Coffee-bean people – take ground coffee beans, put them into boiling water and soon a delightful aroma fills the room and the crystal clear water takes on a beautiful dark brown color. With the carrot and egg you throw away the water after you cook them, but not with coffee. It has eliminated that waste. You pour the coffee into your favorite coffee cup and the odor and taste wakes you up in the morning and settles you down after a fine meal in the evening. The coffee bean has taken the water and transformed it into something better; it has taken its environment and made something better out of it.

Coffee-bean people do exactly the same thing; they enter into the frantic world we live in and add value to it, bringing more joy and prosperity to the people they come in contact with as well as themselves. They measure their riches by the friends they make, not the dollars they have in their bank account. We all need to become coffee-bean type people.

Today only our best is good enough. In sports the high-jumper who clears the bar has to improve the next time because the bar has moved up. The same is true in business – no matter how good we are, the bar is continuously moving up so we must continuously improve. If your organization is the benchmark for anything, that is both good and bad. It is good because you are setting the standard for the rest of the world. It is bad because it is easy to copy you and improve upon something that someone else has created. This means to stay ahead, you need to

Each of us has to excel in everything we do. To excel:

- We need to have a passion for our job – never being satisfied with the job we are doing and always looking for that way to do it better.
- We need to have integrity in everything we do, believing that honesty is the best policy.
- We need to be more creative in the way we do things, always challenging the status quo
- We need to take pride in what we do. When you go home at night, we need to be able to look in the mirror and be able to say, “I did a great job today.”
- We need to enjoy our work. Come to work with a smile on your face. Look for ways to make your work fun. A frown just creates wrinkles.
- We need to be thankful that we have a job – millions of people around the world would give their eye teeth to be in your place.
- We need to lead our organizations like the rest of the world is looking over our shoulder, because they are.
- We need to take prudent risks; we need to dare to fail for that is the way we learn.
- We need to look at profitability as a sign of our worth. Profit is the way customers show the worth of your output. It is a measure of customer satisfaction.

- ❑ We need to embrace change as an opportunity, not as a problem. We need to use it as a stepping stone to our future. If we don't, it will be a tombstone hung around our neck.
- ❑ We need to spice up our business processes to keep ahead of our competition. In cooking we add spice to food – to bring out the flavor and to make it much better than it was. In business, SPICE stands for Structured Process Improvement for Continuous Excellence.
- ❑ We need to excel in business and our personal life. All businesses need a three-to-five year SPICE program defined and budgeted.

I once heard a story about animals in Africa. It goes like this:

“Every day in Africa a gazelle wakes up.
It knows it must run faster than the fastest
lion or it will be killed.

Every morning a lion wakes up.
It knows that it must outrun the slowest
gazelle or it will starve to death.

It doesn't matter whether you are a
gazelle or a lion.

When the sun comes up, you better be

running.”

-- **Abe Gubegna**, Ethiopia, circa 1974

I personally like the word “Excalibur” for it stands for “ever onward; ever forward; ever better. Truly this is the slogan we need in business and in our private lives. Do you have a life slogan that you live up to?

In today’s fast-moving economy often continuous improvement will not do the job that needs to be done. We need to redefine things. As Benjamin Franklin put it, “You can’t put a man in a coat he wore as a boy.” And that is exactly what continuous improvement tries to do. If we buy a boy new suit at age 10, at age 11 we move the buttons over. At age 12, we lower the cuffs and sleeves. But by the time he is 13 there is nothing we can do; we have to go out a buy a new coat. This is exactly what happens in our businesses. We need to do an organizational alignment activity about every five years. There is a better way; you jut need to find it or someone else will.

I will close with a statement from Howard Schultz, Starbucks Chairman of the Board:

“Care more than others think wise;

Risk more than others think safe;

Dream more than others think practical;

Expect more than others think possible.”

And I would add, Do more than others think can be done.

In today's world we can no longer search for the fastest, most practical way through the maze. We have to breakdown the walls of the maze and go directly straight line to the cheese.

And here is my personal guidance to you,
“Be better today than you were yesterday.
Be better tomorrow than you are today.”