
WHAT'S IMPORTANT | Volume III, Issue 1 | January 10, 2007

"What's Important" is a universal concern. The phrase resonates with an infinite number of meanings. What's important is both a question and an answer, depending on the situation.

Bob and Ray worked for the same company. Bob was the hard charging CEO with a constant eye on the bottom line and a head for moving the company forward. Ray was a contented Chief Financial Officer who was good at his job and grateful to have it. Bob had a hard time relating to Ray; he wasn't like the Type-A, competitive leaders with which Bob had filled the organization's upper ranks. In fact, Ray was one of the last people Bob thought could teach him something about the meaning of success – in business and in life.

During a particularly frustrating strategic planning process, Bob took time to visit one of his favorite professors from the MBA program he'd graduated from decades before. Much to Bob's surprise, the once feisty professor was frail, struggling to overcome the symptoms of a debilitating disease.

"So, how are you managing?" asked Bob.

"Today, managing to walk across the street without help is a major accomplishment," replied the professor. "Life is now teaching me that success comes from doing the best I can with what I've got at that moment. Getting sick helped me realize that the only business values that matter are the one's that apply to my personal life too."

Struck by the insight, Bob was unsure how to incorporate it into his life or business. A couple of weeks later while reviewing responses to a staff-wide survey, Bob noticed that two similar questions received dramatically different answers from everyone, everyone EXCEPT Ray, the CFO. He answered the two questions exactly the same.

Q: How do you define success in your job?

A: Doing the best I can at the time, owning and learning from my mistakes, and being grateful for all that I'm given.

Q: How do you define personal success?

A: Doing the best I can at the time, owning and learning from my mistakes, and being grateful for all that I am given.

It didn't take an MBA or an illness for Ray to recognize that true success is defined the same way whether it's in the board room or in the living room. For him, success came from empowering himself in the process rather than fixating on the outcome. Bob recognized the value of Ray's insight and asked him to lead the team re-evaluating the company's core values as part of the strategic planning process.

We each define success differently.

What's important is finding that one meaningful definition of success that can apply to all areas of our life.

Email me at chuck@durakis.com to share your thoughts.

Thanks,

Chuck