

## Focussing on the future way to move forward



How you intend to approach the upcoming holiday period, in terms of personal reflection of the year that is fast coming to a close, and of the fears and challenges you feel may be waiting for you in 2006?

Often, for many, this will be a time when commercialism and spiritual values seem to clash. When promises are made to cut back on spending (albeit maybe only until the “January sales”) and stop over indulging. When the annual visit to your church, which has become part of the Christmas calendar, becomes part of the family tradition.

But however you intend to behave here is a suggestion, that you take the opportunity to reflect back on 2005 and be thankful, even if you don't feel thankful. You see it is easy to be thankful because:

- **You have been able to pay all your bills and have some money in hand.** But could you say the same if some emergency had drained your bank balance and left you in the red?
- **You had a good annual appraisal and are on line for promotion.** But could you say the same if you had been overlooked or failed to meet your personal and company targets?
- **You were given a clean bill of health after an early scare.** But could you say the same if the prognosis had not been so good?
- **You have enjoyed a healthy and harmonious marriage/partnership.** But could you say the same if the relationship had unexpectedly broken and the family unit had to be split?

We are all living in an imperfect world and all can claim that we have been wronged or not deserved the treatment we received. But to harbour such feelings, even bitterness, only serves to feed destructive emotions and sap our energies. It also results in our continually looking backwards not forwards. You see you cannot make progress when you are facing the wrong way. It is only when you focus on the future that you can move ahead with a real sense of purpose.

This attitude does not mean that you over look the wrongs. But what it does mean is that you have “chosen” to put them behind you and are in control of your attitudes and future actions. If you can do this well, then it will increase your energy, build your potential and no doubt improve the prospect of recapturing lost ground as you look at new goals and objectives. So as you look forward to 2006 consider “doing onto others as you would they do onto you”. This could for example mean that you start to:

**Value others:** Statistics suggest that the vast majority of people who leave their jobs do so, not for better salary prospects but because they did not feel valued. This is an indictment on how poorly managers treat their staff. But isn't a person reading this article who does not want to be appreciated for who they are and what they do. Try it, as it can be infectious.

**Thank others:** It's easy to take the efforts of others for granted, when a word of appreciation can, not only build their self-esteem, but also enhance the relationship. This is all the more rewarding if is done in front of their colleagues. As someone once said “It's hard for a person to keep a chip on his shoulder if you allow him to take a bow”. It works.

**Trust others:** With the emphasis now on effective teamwork trust takes on new meaning, and the only way to make someone trustworthier is to trust them. This is not easy, particularly if you don't know them well but you will have to take risks and be prepared to place confidence in them. Remember the person who trusts others will always lose less than the person who distrusts them.

**Practise empathy towards others:** This means that you place yourself in the other person's shoes before you react to the awkward situation or make those demands that are sure to put them under added pressure. This is not hard to do but when it is well done it is one of the differences between effective and ineffective team leaders.

**Follow a “win-win” policy to others:** Ok so the sporting analogy is to beat the opposing team but in business the application is somewhat different. There are managers who firmly believe that the only way to lead is for them to win and others to lose. How crazy this is. There is no loser if you treat others, as you would like to be treated yourself. Both of you will win.

Did you know that, in relation to worrying that research shows that:

- Forty percent of what we worry about never happens.
- Thirty percent of what we worry about has already happened.
- Twelve percent of what we worry about focuses on opinions or situations we cannot change.
- Ten percent of what we worry about worsens our health, and only
- Eight percent of what we worry about concerns problems that we can actually influence.

So think about it, some ninety-two percent of our concerns and worries are needless and surely this Christmas is an excellent time to put things into perspective. It's a good time, if you are feeling down to learn from your bad experiences in 2005 and begin to give thanks for what could in the end be good learning experiences that will help you grow stronger. Then 2006 can become a year when you set out to realise your dreams and ambitions even though these may not turn out exactly as you had planned.

Remember “when life knocks you down, just make sure it knocks you to your knees”. And what better time to put the knocks of 2005 behind you than at this Christmas time - even if it is at your annual visit to your place of worship. So

here is to a Happy and “Thankful” Christmas and a Prosperous New Year – in every sense of these words.

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