

To Grow or Not To Grow – That is the Question

Personal growth. Organizational growth. Two subjects that fill bookstore shelves. Their themes are common: taking risk, dealing with change, unlearning and relearning, becoming accountable and responsible. Being the change you want to see in the world.

While we may be ever-more aware of the benefits of growth, many an individual and many an organization chooses not to take this road. Many folks continue to look for a sense of comfort. A journey down the middle of the road with the hope they will find serenity in that place. Problem is, any serenity they do find is usually short lived.

You see, you can run away from the need to grow, but you can't hide. Change will find you out sooner or later. Just when you thought that you or your company has hit the comfort zone, everything begins unraveling around you.

Growth is about education and action. It's also about much more. It is about emotional and spiritual evolution.

I have had the opportunity to speak to more than 90 CEO groups across the country. When I first began my presentations it was very much a nuts and bolts legal discussion. I must have been doing something right because I consistently got scores of 4.7 and above on a scale of 5. Over the past 5 years that I've been doing these presentations I have grown tremendously – both emotionally and spiritually. My workshops now reflect that growth. And an interesting thing has happened. For the first time in my life I am reaching people and organizations at a deep, life changing level. A very powerful experience! However, for the first time in my speaking career I've also met people who are not open to my message. People who are unwilling to deal with emotional or spiritual issues in a workshop type setting. People who don't want to "go there."

What I have found is when you begin "resonating" at higher levels, your audience gets narrower – not broader. Interestingly, however, it becomes much more dedicated. While I may get 4.5 out of 5 from a group (an unusual experience for me) I find myself getting more work out of that group than ever before. You end up touching a handful of CEOs at a higher level than you ever did before. The others simply may not be interested or not ready. The hard part is to let go of their judgment of you.

So, I could play it super safe and go back to talking about nuts and bolts of legal compliance and getting my steady 4.7s, 4.8s and 4.9s or I could take the risk of speaking from the heart and not reaching an entire audience. Again, the strange thing is, the more I come from my heart, the greater the variance is in my scores, but also the greater amount of follow-up work I get from the executives.

So, what would you do if you were me? Should I play it safe – or go for it? What would you do if it were you? Will you play it safe or would you go for it?

The greatest single inhibitor to growth is the fear of judgment. For the first time in five years I've actually had executives not recommend me to speak to a future CEO group. I've also had days where I've had entire groups give me perfect 5s. Now, if I simply wanted to make everybody feel good about me, I would go for the comfortable middle. But that's not who I am. Is that who you are? Is that who your company is?

I have no judgment about whether you should or should not grow past your comfort zone. That is a decision for every individual to make. For every organization to make. I can only tell you that from my experience, and that of others on this journey, we find ourselves much better equipped to handle change, life has never been more fulfilling, and business has never been more profitable.