RUN WITH THE BULLS without GETTING TRAMPLED

The Qualities You Need to Stay Out of Harm’s Way and Thrive at Work

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK
RUN TO WIN

"My question is: Are we making an impact?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Stephen McCarter James request the honor of your presence at the marriage of their daughter, Deirdre Belknap, to her job."
some years ago, a close friend and his family rented a beautiful vacation home overlooking pink sandy beaches on a turquoise bay in St. Maarten and invited our family to visit them. About mid-morning on the first day, he suggested that we rent a couple of small boats for the afternoon, so we piled into the car and drove to a local marina. Although we knew we wanted to get back to our house via the water, in reality we were not quite sure how to get there. The marina was situated on a different part of the island, separated from our bay by a rocky peninsula. When we explained to the friendly proprietor that we wanted to take the boats to the bay in front of our friend's home, he said, "No problem, mon" with his lilting Caribbean accent.

The two younger boys and I jumped into the eight-foot dinghy powered by a small outboard engine, while my friend and my older son, Jim, launched the sailboat. The erratic wind and the chattering sail did not look promising for sailing, so I threw them a twenty-foot tow rope.

PREFLIGHT CHECKLIST ITEM 2: F ITS WHO WE ARE

We were each created with a unique portfolio of abilities and personal interests. Although no job is a perfect fit for our capabilities, those whose personal characteristics fit their work responsibilities are in the minority. Applying our interests and abilities in the right job is deeply satisfying. Olympic runner, Eric Liddell, as portrayed in the film classic Chariots of Fire (Columbia, 1981), said: "I believe God made me for a purpose, but He also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure."

Many of us who are unhappy with our jobs have pursued vocations for reasons totally unrelated to our skills or passions. A lawyer told me how every day was painful because he hated his job. What he really wanted to do was teach English at a small liberal arts college. When I asked him why he didn't pursue that field, he said that he was a prisoner of $300,000 a year. After law school, his debt structure and lifestyle quickly absorbed his rapid gains in income, and the risk and complexity of changing careers were now unthinkable. Sadly, he was working for.
This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day, thou can’st not then be false to any man. —WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, HAMLET (ACT I, SCENE 3)

Eerie blue light illuminates their pensive faces. Sweat and streaks of black grease glisten on their tense, furrowed brows. Dread-filled eyes dart furtively to their captain, desperately hoping he is right to make this dive. Panicked, hushed voices now whisper, “She’s turning around.” The pinging of the enemy’s sonar increases as rapidly as their heartbeats. “Keep it quiet, boys.” The cramped gray compartment filled with pipes and gauges packs the crew too close together. Noxious odors from the diesel fuel and sulfuric acid in the sub’s batteries make the air almost unbreatheable. The flickering lights threaten to plunge them into darkness. “Deeper, chief, it’s only pressure.” One man’s quiet sobbing and the awful creaking of twisting metal portends the deadly implosion each man knows to be seconds away. Suddenly, the deafening blast of depth charges rocks the boat violently—fire, smoke, screaming—and then the dreaded leaks spring from weakened seams in the hull. Broken bolts fire with the velocity of bullets. At first a trickle, and then an explosion of freezing water—the hull is breached.

WHAT IS INTEGRITY . . . REALLY?

We’ve all heard a lot of graduation speeches or messages from our CEOs stressing the importance of integrity, but it’s easy to be confused about right and wrong. Contributing to this confusion is the fact that so many traditional beliefs have been challenged in the news media, television, film, philosophy, and the courts of public opinion.

Integrity is ultimately a bit abstract—it’s sometimes hard to know what we should do in a given work situation. For example, how do you view the following situations?

INTEGRITY SCENARIOS

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<th>Clearly Wrong</th>
<th>Probably Wrong</th>
<th>Gray</th>
<th>Probably Right</th>
<th>Clearly Right</th>
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1. ____ Take an extra thirty minutes at lunch to get a haircut.
2. ____ Use sick leave to go to a ball game.
3. ____ Tell your manager you have finished a project even though you haven’t.
4. ____ Use a company credit card for personal expenses in a pinch (to be paid back later).
5. ____ Shop on the Internet during work time.
6. ____ Flatter a coworker insincerely because you need her help on an assignment.
7. ____ Report that a team member is finished with a project when actually it’s not quite ready.
8. ____ Accept gifts from an outside vendor.
9. ____ Call in sick when you’re just having a bad day.
10. ____ Don’t lie about the status of a project, but hold back some key facts from your manager about its readiness.
she hadn’t actually run the marathon. She started the race and then apparently just hopped the subway and ran the last mile or so to cross the finish line. Experts speculate that Ruiz didn’t intend to win the race, but she unintentionally stepped back into the race too early, several minutes ahead of the next female runner. Although Ruiz insisted that she completed the race, organizers concluded that the overwhelming evidence proved that she hadn’t. Race officials disqualified Rosie’s win.

Earlier in this book, I suggested that a race works well as a metaphor for our work lives, and I indicated that we should run to win; however, in order for the race to have meaning, it must have rules. Rosie cheated. She crossed the finish line first, but her win was meaningless because she didn’t compete according to the rules of the race.

There are rules in the race of life. Rights and wrongs do exist. In the postmodern world, many believe that moral standards are relative, usually relegated to categories like appropriate and inappropriate. In a favorite New Yorker cartoon, the prophet Moses comes down the mountain to remind his followers that there are some absolutes.

“Well, actually, they are written in stone.”
It is important to remember that we cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are. —Max DePree, Chairman Emeritus, Herman Miller, Inc.

A crisis transformed my son's life during an essential rite of passage. Trying out for a youth sports team or any competitive activity is a defining moment in a child's life. Jim tried out for a Little League baseball team when he turned eleven. Making the eleven and twelve-year-old team is a big deal, but not making it is a bigger deal. Most of the boys who try out make the cut, but a few don't—Jim didn't. Why not? The simple answer is that he didn't do well in the tryouts. The underlying reason was that I didn't help him prepare. The tryouts are always in the middle of February, which is a miserable time to do anything outdoors. What I later learned was that many of the parents started working with their boys in December. They fielded grounders, threw to first base, caught long fly balls, and went to the batting cage—all the skills that would be tested in the tryouts. Getting ready for tryouts wasn’t rocket science—it just took time and focus from both of us. I didn’t help Jim get ready for the tryouts as many of the other dads had done.