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Leaders to Follow

RESPECTING THE PROCESS

By Sara and Jarda Tusek

For most goals that people set in life, there are two aspects: the process and the results. Examples include getting married (dating, then the wedding); having a baby (conception, then the birth); finding a career (education, then the career) and life itself (living, then dying).

What's strange is how often people want to skip the process and go straight to the results! What sense would it make to get married before you dated the person, to give birth before the child was conceived, to enter a career before you were educated, and to die before you've lived?

No sense at all, as is obvious.

So then why do people try to shortcut or avoid the process in smaller ways—cutting through the gas station to avoid the corner traffic light (by the way, this is illegal in most states), going to the “10 items or less” line with 11 (or more) items to avoid the long lines of heaped-high carts, or going on an unhealthy “crash diet” to lose weight fast (and probably gain it back just as fast).

And in more important ways—why do students expect the high grade without putting in the requisite study time? Why do married people expect a strong relationship with their spouse without the outlay of time, attention, and patience that builds love? Why do people try to get rich without having highly-valued skills and knowledge that the society needs and will reward?

Why don't people respect the process?

“AT ANY COST”

Too often people adopt an attitude of “I have to have it.” Desire and desperation take on the role of motivation, leading the person to seek ways to avoid the process (often dull and laborious) necessary to possess the desired end.

The problems begin when the cost of shortcutting the process is taken into account. These problems fall into three broad categories:

THREE COSTS OF CUTTING CORNERS

1. The first cost is quality. Imagine that you want, desperately, to pass an exam or an educational course. Disrespecting the process might involve, for example, cheating rather than studying, or paying someone to do the work for you. You might succeed in passing the exam or course, but you won't have the requisite knowledge or skills to perform as someone who toiled through the laborious process of studying, memorizing, writing, reading, and doing all needed activities to pass the proper way. Would you want to be operated on by a surgeon who cheated his or her way through medical school, or paid someone to take his or her board exams?
2. The second cost is inequality. Some people have access to ways to bypass the process (they know someone who can change bad results into good results or can push their credentials to the top of the pile of applicants, even though their scores are not the highest). Other, equally deserving, people don't have access to preferential treatment and must go through the process one step at a time. These “process-respecting” types are often seen as “suckers” for doing things the right way; sadly, in our society, they are often losers in the competition.
3. The third cost is personal. In the rush to get to the result, it's inevitable that people trample over others. Think of an out-of-control crowd or mob: people push their way to the exit, using their elbows, running over other people, thinking only of their own needs. *to p. 2*

The International Leadership Institute

The Institute was founded in 1985 in Princeton, NJ and remains dedicated to leadership development. The Institute has run more than 70 educational programs in the



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RACE FOR RESULTS

By trying to do “an end run” on the process to race to the results, people trample others under their feet. They see the people around them as simply either obstacles or aids to their progress, and treat those people accordingly. They seem to be thinking, “If you are helpful to me as I leapfrog ahead of the process, I like you; if you don’t help me, you’re an obstacle, and I can deal with you as harshly as ‘necessary’ to get past you.”

Think of a James Bond movie; agent 007 must complete his mission, and will injure or kill anyone in his path. This doesn’t make Bond a monster so much as a man who can “get the job done.” In a twisted way, his ruthless methods become admirable. He will always bypass the process to get to the result, and we get a vicarious thrill out of watching his path of mayhem and destruction to get what he wants.

The only danger here is of adopting Bond’s “slash-and-burn” methods in our own, less glamorous lives. We can talk ourselves into believing that the result is so important that any little deviation from the proper process to achieve the result is either negligible or excusable—or even heroic. You wouldn’t stand docilely in a line at the bank if an armed robber is threatening the teller; the hero would jump to the front of the line to stop the thief. In the same way, we can persuade ourselves that our needs are so important, and our motives are so pure, that “jumping the line” is not wrong—far from being wrong, it’s heroic and good. “The end justifies the means” is the clichéd expression for this kind of distorted thinking, which is all the more insidious by sometimes being accurate—but not often. Really, how often are you trying to get around the process for achieving your desired result in the name of saving a life? Not very often. More often, you simply don’t want to put in the effort to do things the right way.

EFFORT, THEN RESULTS

The old-fashioned way to accomplish a task (the non-exciting way) is through sustained and focused effort. To learn a foreign language, for example, takes months and years of practice and the humility to be constantly corrected. This is a far cry from “French Overnight!” or any other speeded-up process you may see advertised.

“Rome wasn’t built in a day” is another apt cliché to express the determination and hard work necessary to produce a glorious result. In a tyrannical government, the rulers can enslave people, forcing them to labor (the great pyramids of Egypt were most likely built by slave labor, and still stand, a monument to human effort and imagination). But in a democracy, people can’t be made to work, except in times of war or other catastrophe.

It’s really up to the individual to set a goal and then do the work to get to it. Learning and respecting the process to achieve one goal prepares a person for future achievement. He or she gains a certain tenacity and toughness by expending the effort to achieve a challenging goal, and can then repeat the effort in other areas.

In contrast, finding ways to avoid the correct process for getting a result is a dead-end technique. You don’t learn patience, or how to work effectively with others, or how to persevere when discouraged. You also don’t get the irreplaceable satisfaction of doing something hard and succeeding. Cheating and cutting corners may make you feel clever, but it won’t make you feel competent.

To achieve most goals, there is a process and precedent that can be followed. Usually the process is intricately connected to the result, developing the necessary confidence and experience, as the process is lived out, to produce the highest level of results.

Respect the process—

*it’s not only the gateway to the result,
it IS, in large part, the result.*

To Prague!

ILI officers Jarda and Sara Tusek will be in Prague in May and June 2008, investigating the possibility of buying a home and/or office for the Institute’s relocation to Prague in June 2010. With the Czech economy growing and strengthening, and political life becoming more diverse, the Institute is eagerly preparing for this move, and looking for ways to help people in their educational and spiritual lives.