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CHUCK TALK: Dividing the fully engaged from the lackadaisical

BY CHUCK MACHE

I consider myself a pretty fast read on people. Regardless of where anyone sits on the food chain, I'm always on the lookout for those who are engaged and in their business versus those who are disconnected and lackadaisical. I can usually tell after spending a short period of time with someone just how absorbed they are in their livelihood.

For the sake of argument, let's put people in two different boxes for a moment. In the first box, there are those that go hard every day. They are on a daily mission to advance any and every agenda that is in front of them.

They have a reputation as "doers," and they are acutely aware of the critical actions that they need to complete each and every day. They want to look back and say, "I had a good day – I moved the critical things forward."

While they aren't successful each and every day, in fact often their goals are too steep, they know that it is the fight that counts. They march forward because tough days are what they are accustomed to, because they are tough, and they deal only in the tough issues. They know that it is in dealing in the tough issues that progress will be made. They wouldn't have it any other way because they are driven to get better.

In the second box, there are those who tend to take life as it comes their way. They have potential, but they do not assert themselves the way those in the first box do. They spend time thinking about asserting themselves, but they rarely act upon it. In fact, they are not proactive when it comes to tough issues. They've programmed themselves to avoid "tough" and deal in the less difficult. They would prefer a day filled with reacting to issues versus a day of proactively attempting to accomplish some hefty goals.

"Busy work" gets between them and executing on the difficult issues. They are not assertive, but they wish they were more so. They are not prepared to take the risks associated with stretching their activities to reach for new heights. They associate lofty goals with the pain that it takes to get there. So instead, they stay in the coziness of administering their life in a predictable, safe way.

I tend to have this debate that goes on in my head over these two different types of people who are found in sales, marketing, operations, managerial and executive levels. The debate focuses on which of the two is leading a more difficult life?

At first glance, one would surely believe that those who set their sights on higher goals and work every day with the discipline and execution to reach those goals certainly lead a more difficult life. That would make it, by definition, a struggle to reach levels that you have set forth, and therefore, life would be harder. Meanwhile, the other type rarely changes their behavior pattern and are stuck in the same reactive, safe zone of life that, while it won't win them any awards, certainly won't give them any bruises and scars like the first type.

I think the real answer to the debate is "How happy are you doing it the way you are doing it?" It's like the time I played hooky from school and spent the day in front of the TV set. I recall watching "Hogan's

Heroes" and having an epiphany about what I was really doing. All was good. I was doing OK in school. There were no real issues. I was getting by. I had escaped the difficulties of another day in school.

Yet as I watched the show, I really wasn't watching the show. You see, while I didn't even know it, I was having a difficult day, and this is my point.

I wasn't happy with myself. Deep down, and starting to rise to the top, was the feeling of "I can do more." On one hand, I had it made. Nobody was home, I had the house, the refrigerator and the TV to myself, and life was good. On the other hand, and what began gnawing at my psyche, was the fact that I had cheated myself out of a day of making a real effort. What I had thought would make me happy, instead made me miserable.

So, which road is more difficult? The one that you go down that is bumpy, challenging and difficult to negotiate? Or the safe, paved, known road that leads to the same place every day, to the town of Safeville. Before you decide if the road you are traveling is the right one, truthfully ask yourself how happy you are. The truth is, Safeville is a very difficult place to live for many people. If that's the case for you, I'd suggest moving.

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Chuck Mache, president of Chuck Mache Communications, is a speaker, executive coach and consultant. His work is dedicated to helping companies and individuals break through to their next level and he is the bestselling author of the "The Four Kinds of Sales People: How and Why They Excel and How You Can Too." Learn more and sign up for Chuck's complimentary monthly newsletter at www.ChuckMache.com.