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Helping you align your people with your vision



## Celebrate Spring, Celebrate Yourself!

By Libby Wagner, Founder of Professional Leadership Results

**One of the reasons I choose to live in the Northwest is that I love the seasons. Okay, okay, no snide remarks about how Seattle only has one season: rainy. Not true at all. Spring is simply amazing, and I'm noticing it more this year because I have new, different running routes, and I'm making it a point to take a look at my neighbors' yards and gardens as I jog by in the early morning light.**

What a delight of color and texture and smells! Before I wax on about the magnificent magnolia, the rhapsodic rhododendrons and the amazing azaleas, let me tell you about my Fuji cherry tree. I anxiously await this tree's entrance to spring. As soon as the days begin to lengthen even a little bit, I'm out there, underneath the gnarled branches checking for the smallest swelling of bud. It's so hard to describe what happens when this tree blooms—it only lasts about two weeks before the tiny leaves push through behind the blossoms. But for those two weeks—wow! It is a canopy of the palest pink, double blossom wonder. How about a popcorn tree? How about a massive confetti umbrella? *Whatever*—it's a celebration of what's fabulous. It's a party in my front yard.

This gets me thinking about celebrations, about growth and renewal and increased energy and lifted spirits. What about you? How are you tending to your spirits? As a leader, how are you leading yourself? And how are you celebrating yourself?

### NOTROCKETSCIENCE PRINCIPLES

Recently, I've begun sharing my Not Rocket Science Principles of leadership with my clients and friends. You'll not be amazed at how simple these are (They're not rocket science!):

1. LEAD YOURSELF FIRST.
2. ASK FOR WHAT YOU WANT.
3. BE SPECIFIC.
4. CLOSE YOUR MOUTH AND LISTEN.
5. MOVE OVER.

When you are successful at leading yourself (NRS 1), you make regular great things about being a leader is that people follow you; one of leader is that people follow you. Where, oh where, are you going? They're sitting around the conference with their suitcases packed. How Here are some reminders of ways to celebrate you by investing in your development and growth:

1) **READ.** I have to admit I'm partial to old-fashioned reading—you know the kind where you have a book? I'm all about the annotations, the margin-scribbling, the asking of questions as I move along. Engage with the text. However, a second-best strategy would be to listen to books on CD, especially while you're traveling or doing something that makes real reading prohibitive. Read a variety of subjects—both within your industry and outside. Challenge yourself to try on new ideas and concepts. Read something inspiring, read something redemptive.

2) **TAKE A CLASS.** There are so many opportunities for professionals to increase their knowledge and skills—why are you not taking advantage of this? Choose classes that are relevant to your work or that

complement your current skills. Choose something to develop a strength you already have. How about taking a class that's totally unrelated to your work? Learn how to paint, or tie flies, or cook Thai food. Did you know that one of the ways to impact the eventual deterioration of your brain function is to keep learning new things? Grow those dendrites!

**3. GET A COACH.** A good coach's work with you is forward-thinking and future-focused—a coaching relationship is not the same as a counseling relationship. A good coach will help you strategize how to reach your goals and will hold you accountable for the decisions and actions regarding those goals. A good coach will challenge you. Even if you're already good—couldn't you be better? If you're not growing and developing, you're standing in the same place. I learned to ski a long time ago. This year I invested in a half-day lesson while skiing with friends in Mt. Bachelor, Oregon. It was great! I was challenged, I practiced, I improved. It completely changed the rest of my week because I took time out to get a coach for something I wanted to change. Why not consider hiring a coach for something you'd like to do? Why not invest in someone who will encourage you to go beyond the current limits of your thinking or abilities?

**4. REDUCE NUMBNESS.** I have to be honest here: I really wanted to say, "turn off your television!" Whenever I hear people say they don't have time to read, exercise, or eat well, I always wonder how much time they're wasting on numbing activities. This includes passive television watching, Internet surfing, or any other activity that takes away sensations or feelings—anything that detracts or distracts from your celebrating yourself, your investment in your success as a human being. (My dictionary also includes in the definition of numbness 'an application of a local anesthetic'...) This is not to say you should not invest in relaxation, as this is an important element of a balanced life. However, watching television for 5+ hours each night is not relaxing, it's numbing. Your brain actually *slows down* with repeated, habitual television watching. I'm not making this up!

**5. MOVE YOUR BODY.** Energy begets energy. If you want to have more energy, you need to generate it. This does not happen by neglecting your body, the temple (yes, temple) and container of your

energy. If you think you hate "exercise" then find something you do like, and do it! Don't wait! Take a walk. Ride a bike. Swim. Hike. There are so many options; you can find one that works for you. Usually, I run to music on my iPod, but recently, I wanted a new challenge and thought I might try listening to some educational or motivational CDs. One I've enjoyed is *The Strangest Secret*, by Earl Nightingale. His classic message from 1956 is that whatever we choose to think about is who we become. Fabulous reminder! So, there you have it—two-for-one on my *celebrate me* list!

**6. CHOOSE HAPPINESS.** Just yesterday, I was working with a wonderful woman who came to help me organize my office—she's the goddess of organization! Normally, I'm a fabulously organized person—my closet is organized by color and item type—but for some reason, I seemed to be creating an increase in chaos in my office rather than an orderly place where I can do good work and good thinking. I was so excited Becky was there! We sorted and sifted and rearranged. I merrily made an extra trip to buy more plastic bins and remarked that she had such a great job because people are so relieved after they interact with her. As she was leaving, she remarked that she thought I was probably really good at my work. I'm not sure how she knew this—I was not offering consulting advice, I was not coaching her about her personal goals, I was not dazzling her with an inspiring speech from the stage. So, I accepted the compliment and said, "Yes! I love what I do!" And she said, "I'll bet you don't have many bad days, do you?" Nope. I don't. I choose to be happy. I choose to celebrate each day by seeing it as a gift and an opportunity to do something amazing—to make my life better by making someone else's life better. And, what I do know for sure, is that if I choose to feel bad, I will never make anyone else feel better. If I choose to live a toxic, unhappy life, I can never live a life that's bad enough to make anyone else's life better, including and especially my own. Are there difficult times, challenging issues, despicable acts? Yes, but I get to choose how to respond to those—I get to choose both my thoughts and my actions. I choose the good stuff. Leading yourself first means you need to invest in the good stuff and in your potential! What are you doing *today* to celebrate you? ❖

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