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The Golden Oldie Road to 1,000: Some of Our Most Popular Blogs

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The Golden Oldie Road to 1,000

In anticipation and early celebration of the 1,000th blog, we are sharing an e-book of golden oldies. They somewhat represent the 10 years we've been at this. A few were very popular, others kinda fell flat, and a couple were funny (to us anyways). They authentically capture how our work has evolved, and I know for sure they became better when Garrett joined.

We hope you enjoy this e-book and that you continue to hang out with for another decade!

Lorne Rubis

The Humility Code (From 06/2015).

Key Point: It is both comforting and daunting to embrace the idea that “character” involves a journey. We have the ability and responsibility to develop our personal character. Based on this premise, [David Brooks](#), the highly regarded New York Times pundit and author, has appropriately entitled his recent book, “[The Road to Character](#).” The prime ingredient on the bumpy path, according to Brooks, is HUMILITY. Towards the end of this thought provoking book, he summarizes what he calls the “Humility Code.”

The Humility Code:

1. Human beings seek a life of purpose, meaningfulness, righteousness, virtue and NOT just one of pleasure. Life is essentially a moral drama not a hedonistic one. Holiness is a more noble pursuit than happiness.
2. The road to character begins with an accurate understanding of our nature and recognizing we are flawed creatures. We have a tendency to be self-centered and over confident. However, we are not the center of the universe.
3. Although we are flawed creatures, we are splendidly endowed. We have been granted the capacity to take on the struggle of personal improvement.
4. In this epic battle against our weaknesses, our greatest virtue is humility. However, we cannot do it alone and nor are we expected to.
5. Pride blinds us to our weaknesses and makes us think we are better than we are. Pride drives us to prove that we are better than others and makes it hard to be vulnerable before those whose love we need.
6. It doesn't matter whether we work for a hedge fund or charity; there are heroes and schmucks in both worlds. The most important thing is our willingness to engage in the struggle for virtue. After attending to the basic necessities of living, this is our central purpose.
7. Character is built in the course of confronting our own weaknesses. This involves much more than what others can see us do or hear us say. Constant small acts of caring, giving, and considerate, humble thinking creates the trend in our lives that results in habitual self discipline rather than remaining a slave to our weaknesses.

8. People of character are capable of staying attached to a calling, purpose and people through the long run. The things that lead us astray, like fear, gluttony, and vanity are short run. Elements like courage, honesty, humility, (and I would add, self-accountability, respect, abundance...) take us on the long road. Humility also comes from the freedom in understanding that our commitment to these virtues cannot be completed in a lifetime.
9. No one can achieve self-mastery on his or her own. If we are to progress in the confrontation with ourselves, we must be humble enough to put ourselves in a state to receive the affection of others. We have to draw outside of our selves to cope with the forces inside.
10. Life for all of us is “U” shaped. We advance, retreat and so on. The redemption always comes in the form of “grace.” When admitting our failure, help comes in many different forms. When we recognize that you and I are unconditionally accepted and we accept what is, the path forward and accompanying gratitude usually arrives.
11. Defeating our weaknesses includes the ability to quiet ourselves....to mute the sound of our own egos . Only by quieting ourselves will we be open to the external forces that are waiting to help us.
12. The humble person accepts that experience is a better teacher than pure reason. Knowledge is not the same as wisdom. Wisdom is knowing how to behave when perfect knowledge is lacking.
13. If we serve work that is intrinsically compelling and we strive to be excellent at that, we will likely serve both the community and ourselves. This is most often found by looking and understanding what the world is asking of our vocation and us. If we just try to serve ourselves we likely will never be satisfied. If we just try and serve the community, we may wonder if we’re ever appreciated enough. What problem is addressed or value provided by something you intrinsically enjoy? Serve that.
14. The wise leader is a steward of her or his organization and tries to leave it in better condition than how she or he found it. A sound leader finds the right balance between competing values and goals.
15. The individual who takes on the personal struggle to become a better human being may not become rich but will become mature. Maturity does not glitter. It is not about becoming better than anyone else or winning. The most important journey, what Brook describes as the “Road to Character,” is about becoming better today than you and I were yesterday.

Character Moves:

1. Reflecting on Brooks' 15 elements of his Humility Code is probably daunting enough. The good news in all this, of course, is that we are all flawed and what Brooks describes as perpetual "stumblers." The beauty and meaning in life is in the stumbling and becoming more graceful as we travel the character road.
2. The paradox seems to involve taking ourselves out of being the center of everything while being much more personally accountable for being very centered. It is not all about us and yet at the same time, it is.

Humility in The Triangle,

Lorne

One Millennial View: My profession has me immersed in the entertainment industry, writing stories about some of the most lucky, hand-picked, successful, and financially rich individuals on the planet. I see people become jaded over celebrity success constantly. A lot of people die a little inside when they comprehend the fact [Kim Kardashian](#) can lay in her mansion and be paid far more than a teacher's annual salary to Tweet out 140 characters mentioning product placement for a company that will award her five or six figures, but it's reality. Now, what some celebrities do understand is the power of humility. Take a lesson from [Jurassic World's Chris Pratt](#), arguably the most [sought after newcomer](#) in Hollywood. He's all about humility, not taking himself too seriously, and his career is being championed because of it. One is cringed at, the other celebrated, but at the end of the day, Pratt's living conditions aren't too shabby either.

– Garrett

Edited and published by Garrett Rubis

Are You Good at Vulnerability or Shame?

(From 11/2012).

Key Point: Shame is the feeling that “I AM wrong, there’s something deficient in me and I am just not good enough.” It is the FEAR of disconnection. Shame is not like guilt, which is “I did something wrong.” And shame is not like embarrassment, which is “I have done something silly.” Furthermore, perfectionism is often one’s attempt to avoid the feelings of shame. So, when a person is a perfectionist, that person is carrying the voice of shame, which tells them that they ARE wrong and not good enough. Social scientist and author [Brene Brown](#)’s research on the issue of shame is very powerful and deserves much more attention. People don’t talk much about it. She makes an important point. When we are embarrassed or guilty we can often acknowledge and talk about it. There is something to report on and since it is behavior, we can address it and change it. But when we FEEL shame, we do not discuss it because there is nothing to discuss. We accept it as a given and it eats away at our insides. If I make a mistake and focus on my behavior and describe it as stupid, I can change that “stupid” behavior. But if I define ME as being “stupid,” then there is nothing to discuss... I’m just “stupid” and ashamed. This leads to self talk in the mirror like, “I’m just not good enough,” “you are an idiot,” “you are undesirable,” “you are just not good enough and never will be,” “why would anyone love someone as unworthy as me?” Ouch.

Learning how to become more self-accepting, vulnerable and authentic is hard work. It involves self-awareness, and takes practice. It also takes courage and vulnerability. Here is a segment from one of Brown’s blogs:

“Shame resilience is key to embracing our vulnerability. We can’t let ourselves be seen if we’re terrified by what people might think. Often ‘not being good at vulnerability’ means that we’re damn good at shame. ‘We all have shame. We all have good and bad, dark and light, inside of us. But if we don’t come to terms with our shame, our struggles, we start believing that there’s something wrong with us – that we’re bad, flawed, not good enough – and even worse, we start acting on those beliefs. If we want to be fully engaged, to be connected, we have to be vulnerable. In order to be vulnerable, we need to develop resilience to shame.”

Character Move:

1. Download the [Thought It Was Just Me Worksheet](#). Have the courage to be imperfect.
2. Watch [her TED video](#) below (it has more than 6 million views).
3. Dare and have the courage to work on being more authentic and accept that you are enough...
While still being committed to personal growth.
4. Remember that connection is why we are here on earth and the key to that is authenticity, vulnerability and being resilient to SHAME. You and I are totally worthy of love and belonging.

Vulnerable and connected in the Triangle,

Lorne

Creating Magical Moments (From 05/2018).



Story: I spend a lot of time talking to execs across a wide variety of industries. Frankly, most of my conversations involve well-intended ideas from leaders who genuinely care, yet are afflicted with exceptionally lousy execution regarding what really matters to employees and customers. We have become so good at wanting to do everything, that we often end up not doing much of anything that really matters. It's kind of like "participation awards" gone wild. Still, people feel like they are working harder than ever with capacity stretched to the limit. Why are things so goofed up?

Key Point: Be aware when activity and effort become the key measures, versus meaningful results for customers and employees. This often means that “trying” and “working hard” become the default outcomes. Another signal that effort and outcome might be out of sync, is when the same customer and/or employee complaints continue year after year. Or, when there is little growth in revenue from existing customers, while there is an imbalanced effort in finding new ones. High customer and employee turnover is also a big red flag. That’s where making meaningful choices so the team/company can get big results on what I call “magical moments that really matter,” comes into this blog.

Every employee and customer (stakeholder) is on an evolving journey with an organization. Today, with the benefit of big data, we have the ability to dissect and fully understand that continuous journey right down to a customer/team member of ONE. The sustainable, highly adaptive and leading organizations will constantly focus almost all of the resources on the “magical moments that really matter.” It’s that easy and that hard.

As an example, every person has a first day/week at work. There is an opportunity to make that very moment “magical” for every new employee. Research has shown that the entry success into a company can have a huge impact on speed to positive contribution and employment longevity. How well does your organization manage that key moment?

Another example, is what happens with customer greetings (“I know you and see you”) every time they connect with the company. What powerful way does your organization impact the way customers connect EVERY time? Focus on these and other differentiating moments, and the magic does happen.

Personal Leadership Moves:

1. Courageously confront your daily activity. Without being defensive, examine who really cares, and what difference to end user customers or people does your work make?
2. Do not rest on the idea that you get a lot of recognition for your effort or hard work. That actually may get you out of a job faster if you’re not making a difference to the moments that matter.
3. Challenge yourself and the organization to prioritize the moments that magically matter, and use data rather than opinion. And not every moment is equal. Spend your time on the ones that really, really, really matter. I know you can.

Magical moments in Personal Leadership,

Lorne

One Millennial View: I'd be willing to bet that most Millennials have experienced little to no Magical moments. We know not to "expect" too much, because we don't want to be perceived as over entitled. That also means our standards are incredibly low. When your friend's company's "Taco Friday" sounds way too good to be true, then the magic in your place of work is Hocus Bogus.

– Garrett

Edited and published by Garrett Rubis

Hawkins Cheezies: Totally Exponential (From 12/2017).



Key Point: Undoubtedly, my favorite snack is Hawkins Cheezies. No other orange substitute will do. I totally resonate with the following comment by another dedicated customer: “For some reason, a bag of Cheezies (the real, Hawkins kind – they’re Canadian, did you know)? With some kind of big red wine has become my idea of heaven on a Friday night” – @dinnerwithjulie.

Janis Thiessen’s recent book, [Snacks: A Canadian Food History](#), explores the history of snacks and dedicates a whole chapter to Hawkins Cheezies: “I was not a Cheezie lover until I toured the company and learned about their history. I saw how they operate and actually will now consume the product from time to time out of affection for their work process. Hawkins uses all of the original equipment in a plant within a small-town in Ontario, so you get every size and shape of Cheezie imaginable. It’s a very tiny operation. They don’t work Friday afternoon or weekends. Their evening shifts are only cleaning shifts and they do not advertise because they would have to increase production. There are other options out there, but the difference with the Cheezie is that the process of making them is not computerized.”

Hawkins Cheezies Mission Statement:

“We believe that people, our managers, our permanent staff, our temporaries and our students represent the brick and mortar of our company. It is through people producing the finest quality product available, we will continue to forge our future. We will always recognize that our customers are the vital key to our future. We are obligated to our customers to deliver the finest and we have promised to do so in full measure.”

The “history” on their modest website details more, saying “W.T. Hawkins Ltd., a 66-year-old staple in rural Ontario, Canada, is currently led by president Kent Hawkins – grandson of the founder. After W.T. Hawkins passed away in 1961, his son, W.W. (Web) Hawkins assumed control and guided the company for nearly 30 years...

Continuing with the basics of family values, fresh ingredients and hands-on management, the Hawkins legend has flourished. Dedicated to quality and service, Hawkins Cheezies® receives loyal support from its customers and continues to perfect its manufacturing success... We have created a family tradition that extends beyond bloodlines. It is a family that has strong ties to the community and one that encourages giving where one can.”

I write constantly about how we have to be transformative and change or someone will eat us for a snack. So I wanted to highlight a company that has and continues to flourish while resisting significant change. As mentioned above, Hawkins Cheezies still uses their original equipment and is so dedicated to traditional family values and fresh ingredients that it refuses to compromise for the sake of growth. It is totally possible to be relevant for the future and very traditional. In the end, the customer has to really value what you produce, employees have to be loyal to your product, customers and purpose, while the company provides an environment where people want to stay and fully contribute. That recipe will transcend exponential technology.

Personal Leadership Moves:

1. Would your customers take a joy filled selfie consuming your product or service? Cheezies customers do and send them to the company (even though the company has never campaigned for them). How might you make that happen in your organization?
2. Basics count first! Fancy technology is a means, not an end. Digitizing a dumb business model or poor offering just expedites making more crap. If you want a great culture and loyal customers, make sure your basics are super solid first. (Ideally, in one way or another, it pairs favorably with red wine).

Hawkins Cheezies in Personal Leadership,

Lorne

One Millennial View: I never buy Cheetos or Cheez-Its, but Hawkins Cheezies are good enough for one to suspect they might be sprinkled with crack cocaine due to their seeming propensity to possess addictive properties. They are notably great. Thankfully, it's just a tried and true formula backed by time, values, customer loyalty and solid company culture. The same can be said for other companies like In-N-Out and more that haven't wavered from their original successful recipes.

– Garrett

Edited and published by Garrett Rubis

Laugh Your %#\$ Off! For Real! (From 10/2013).

Key Point: Laughter and a sense of humor are like oxygen for the spirit. I love to make people laugh and work with people who do the same. Over my career, practical jokes and just plain finding the humor in daily stuff has made such a difference in my life. Getting results at work is serious, but it doesn't mean that it requires everyone to be head down, humorless and somehow thinking fun is for "after work." These days, particularly with the advancement of mobile technology, work and after work are blending into what is clearly just life. I am not going to reserve humor for "after 5:00 p.m. and weekends." I don't expect everyone to be a comedian or prankster but if you're a sour puss, please go work somewhere else. [The Mayo Clinic](#) and countless other scientific organizations have underlined the important health benefits of laughter. You and I deserve to laugh and have fun with each other for no other reason than it is physically and emotionally good for us. In fact, I believe we owe it to ourselves to laugh out loud daily, as many times as we can. It also impacts our P.Q. (Positive Quotient).

This week my CEO took a few of us to a world class Comedy Festival. Belly laughing for a couple of hours reminded me of how sometimes we under value humor in the office. By the way, this CEO is a guy who laughs everyday. I love working with him. (Trust me... This does not diminish his toughness). During my career I have prided myself in practical jokes, including but not limited to putting a colleagues sailing boat up for sale at 25 percent of its value, hiding a CEO's top secret plan after he threatened to fire anyone who misplaced it, and an unimaginable number of infantile, but hopefully well intentioned pranks. More importantly, finding the daily humor in most things is what I really believe puts a smile on each other's souls.

Even serious subjects are fair game. As an example, we are getting ready to up our game by advancing the company diversity/inclusion strategy and that's causing some angst regarding implementation. So I sent the following picture out and added the caption as a precursor to our planning discussion on the next steps:

"Ok raise your hand if you want to talk about our inclusion strategy?"



Ok... Humor is personal but at least I'm trying to see comedy in this subject... Haha.

Character Moves to Improve Our Sense of Humor (Adapted from the Mayo Clinic research):

1. Put humor on your daily horizon. Consciously look for things that make you and others laugh. This could include proactively looking for photos or comic strips that make you chuckle. Keep funny movies or comedy podcasts on hand for when you need an added boost. (I love CBC's "[This is That](#)." Everytime I listen to those guys, I burst out laughing).
2. Laugh and the world laughs with you. Find a way to laugh about your own situations and watch your stress begin to fade away. Even if it feels forced at first, practice laughing. It does your body good. Don't be afraid to be vulnerable. (Remember my [scrotum blog](#))?
3. Share a laugh. Make it a habit to spend time with funny friends and teammates. And then return the favor by sharing comedic stories or jokes with those around you. Occasionally a great, and still tasteful practical joke makes a wonderful contribution.
4. Knock-knock. Look for the humor in situations around you. Connect the wonderful attributes of your teammates to what is naturally funny about themselves and their situations. This is NOT making fun of people, but finding wonderful humor in what is unique and glorious about them.
5. Know what isn't funny. Don't laugh at the expense of others. Some forms of humor aren't appropriate. Use your best judgment to discern a good joke from a bad, or hurtful one. Anything involving the bathroom and related body parts is usually out of line... Certainly with workmates. (This is where there is a difference between "work" and "non-work."

Havin' a laugh in The Triangle,

Lorne

Kindness is Free (From 05/2010).

Tom Peters, one of the most important observers and writers on “excellence” in business, has a chapter with this title in his book [The Little Big Things, 163 Ways to Pursue Excellence](#). Why? Kindness makes a huge difference to excellence in leadership. And I believe it is one of the key tenants of Respect.

In the chapter he goes on to refer to a quote from Plato, “Be kind, for everyone is fighting a great battle.” The point is that you and I need to look at things from the perspective of the other person. This means we have to care. That’s hard work.

Kindness opportunities present themselves daily with teammates and others, including customers and suppliers. Being kind and thoughtful applies to almost every internal and external activity we’re involved in. What a powerful currency kindness is and it’s totally free!

Try to be extra conscious about kindness this week. Please post me back and let me know the outcome.

with Character,

Lorne