

The Leader: What If ...?

by **Frederick E Roach**

People often second-guess themselves. We live in a world of examining our alternatives, as well as our past actions and future possibilities. We second-guess ourselves in every aspect of our lives: mentally, emotionally, socially, physically and spiritually. We often second-guess ourselves at work, in our family life during financial planning, in our diet, when exercising, going to church or volunteering through community service . . . in effect, in every expression of who we are.

From a strategic planning perspective, there are tremendous positives that can be generated with "what ifs." To discern the appropriate future direction of any organization, the leaders have to ask a lot of "what if" questions.

We see the results of significant strategic thinking at Baylor. Boone Powell Jr., our CEO and president, has said thinking strategically is automatic for him. "It's second nature," he said. "Strategic planning becomes a way of thinking . . . It becomes a habit. The plan is as long as the distance between my office and the cafeteria."

Mr. Powell knows how to look at alternatives and make tough decisions. He recently said of Baylor Health Care System, "We need to create a dynamic differential. To do this, we must out-service others; have higher patient satisfaction; create the best value; be the quality leader and continue our growth strategy."

To effectively deal with the "what if" questions of life, we need to use our leadership skills. We need vision, integrity, decisiveness, courage, intellectual capacity, tenacity, faith and motivation. We see a good example of the "what ifs" of life when we look at the life of one of our great presidents, Abraham Lincoln. Between 1831 and 1858, Lincoln experienced a series of personal and political failures. He failed at almost everything he tried. But he didn't quit!

In 1860, Lincoln was elected president of the United States, becoming the key leader who kept us "united." He once said after losing a political race, "The path was worn and slippery. My foot slipped from under me, but I recovered and said to myself, 'It's a slip and not a fall.'"

What if . . . he hadn't had the tremendous strength to go on?

"What If. . . "

1. I Released My Innovative Self

Real fun in life comes when we "let go" and begin the journey of creativity and personal growth. This moves us into the "discovery zone," the area where our inquisitiveness moves us to new heights.

2. I Was Guaranteed Not To Fail

We've all heard the question: "What would I attempt if I were guaranteed not to fail?" Try it! Give yourself and others permission to stretch your mind, your contribution, your stewardship.



3. **I Was Given The Ultimate Promotion**

We dream of "moving up" the corporate ladder. "What if" your dream were realized? Are you ready? Have you prepared yourself to take on the increased responsibilities? Ready yourself will speed up the process.

4. **I Lived Out The Ideal Me**

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s favorite statement was: "I have a dream." What's our dream? How could I use my natural God-given abilities to thrive in living out what I believe I have the potential to accomplish?

5. **I Practiced Habits Of Effectiveness**

There's no magic in author Stephen R. Covey's "7 Habits." What if I practiced the habits that would make me a more effective person? Here's a "what if" that we can move to action!

6. **I Won The Lottery This Week**

Many think more money might be the answer. They dream about how money would change their lives. Yet we hear of the many disasters in families' lives as a result of winning large sums of money. Our depending on this "what if" is foolhardy if we're seeking the most from life.

7. **I Smiled More**

What is the value of a smile? To you and the one with whom you share a smile? A friend of an employee, Solomon Huber, wrote: "(Smiling) creates happiness in a home, fosters goodwill in a business and is the countersign of a friend. It is rest to the weary, daylight to the discouraged, and sunshine to the sad and nature's best antidote for trouble."

8. **I Took Time To Stroke Myself**

What have you or I done well lately? Let's take time to give ourselves a positive stroke. We need this mental and emotional support from ourselves and others to maintain a solid balance.

9. **I Relied On Teamwork**

"What if" I depended more on my fellow team members? Would the load be lighter? Would work be more fun as we drew on the unique contribution each team member might make?

10. **I Depend More On God**

This is one "what if" to which I'm certain of the answer. In James 4:8 we read these words: If we "draw near to God. . . He will draw near to you." A fantastic promise! A tremendous resource!