

My father was 40 when he contracted Multiple Sclerosis and could no longer earn a living as a Teamster truck driver. My Mom started working three jobs seven days a week and did this for six years; I was 13 when this occurred. Fast-forward twelve years; I was in Okinawa Japan as a Marine Lance Corporal. A self-assessment showed I had graduated high school, one year of college, a tour in the Army and now in the Marines. I could have blamed my father's illness for my lack of accomplishments however; I asked myself "What do I have to do to improve my chances of future success?"

I decided to look at myself as a business (Steve Inc) and then asked if I was an executive looking to purchase a company would I buy Steve Inc.? No, because Steve Inc was not worth much, it had very little value. While serving my county and standing on foreign soil, I had an epiphany... It was up to me to positively influence my future...or not.

A natural law states that a body in motion tends to stay in motion unless acted upon by an outside force. Using this same law then it is reasonable to conclude that either a company grows or shrinks but it does not stay still. All good company officers know that unless a company is growing then it is showing the first signs of death. Since Steve Inc was not growing then it must be dying; an outside force needed to put Steve Inc in motion to grow. Well, if I am my own business then I was in reality really working for myself. Therefore, it was and still is my responsibility to improve the net worth of Steve Inc.

It was my responsibility to improve the overall value of Steve Inc. The first goal I set was to increase my education. Therefore, I was a Marine by day and a student by night; my friends went out most nights while I went to school or studied. It is challenging to stay in and study; playing is more fun however, playing does not improve a company. I sacrificed my twenties in order to set the stage for future success. What this success might be was unknown at the start but at least I was exerting an outside force to change the direction I was going.

Once I reached my first goal, then I set another, then another, with each goal progressively increasing the value of Steve Inc. It has been over twenty years since that day in Okinawa and Steve Inc is still growing. It seems that as soon as I think I have finished improving Steve Inc life changes and I need to adapt to a new situation I am facing or will be facing soon.

I had a recent conversation with a person who works for a local company. We were discussing the act of doing a little more each day to improve yourself or your job skills. This person stated that he refused to do more than what he was being paid to do. I looked him in the eye and said "A man who refuses to do more than what he is being paid to do will never be paid more for what he is doing."

His jaw hit the ground when I then stated that if he refused to increase his value to the company then the company had no responsibility to increase his pay. He was already being paid for his current job skills so the company was paying him all he was worth. The point being that if he was unwilling to do more to improve himself or his job skills then he was never going to earn

more money. He became agitated, his faced turned red, and he raised his voice. I told him yelling at me was not going to exonerate him from his personal responsibility to improve his own position in life.

A human life is nothing more than a collection of decisions made over minutes, hours and days and these are the building materials for your life. You control the choices you make so, therefore, the only person responsible for the outcome of your life is you. If you need to blame someone for your successes or failures go take a good long look in the mirror. You will see the person in control of your life. So, have you positively influenced your future today?