

Governing Energy

Pasteur Forgotten?

Volume 5 Number 21—November 10, 2016

A recent fortune cookie revealed the following guidance, “*There is absolutely no substitute for a genuine lack of preparation.*” How many of us have gone into a meeting in this state? How many sales people have headed to a key client call in this state?

We do it all the time! Running from chore to chore, multi-tasking like the preverbal *chicken with its head cut off*, much of our day is like this.ⁱ

Whatever happened to, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure or “A stick in time save nine;” phrases that our mother’s taught us when we were young.ⁱⁱ It seems as though in our chaotic and so-called fast pace environment, these quant statements are no longer relevant. Not so fast!

Among his long list of accomplishments, Louis Pasteur is most remembered for the Pasteurization process as well as developing vaccines for anthrax and rabies.ⁱⁱⁱ Products of science that we still use to this day. In his relatively short life, Pasteur was very prolific.

He is credited with saying, “*Chance favors the prepared mind.*”^{iv} The very antithesis of my fortune cookie and most multi-tasking behaviors.

Hypothesis: if prolific producers of high value are organized and prepared, that model should apply to the rest of us as well. If the empirical evidence supports this hypothesis (which it seems to), then it follows that our multi-tasking model is broken or even wrong!

One example of society’s belief that we do not multi-task well is the common ban on using our cell phones while driving in a school zone. If we can talk and drive effectively, why would society impose this regulatory constraint and associated traffic ticket fines?

There is no excuse for not preparing for life events. A wedding is planned, retirement (sometimes planned), college and the list goes on. Business events should be planned and prepared for as well and not as a function of running from meeting-to-meeting.

Shareholders, your superiors, your subordinates and colleagues deserve more than being ill prepared and getting the probable (likely) results. While “*even a blind dog can find a bone every so often,*” hope with a lack of preparation is not a strategy.^v

If chance favors those who are prepared, just imagine if the statistical probabilities of your next meeting or sales call are more certain given appropriate preparation? The Scout motto, “Be Prepared” is over one hundred years old.^{vi} It seems to have stood the test of time.

But enough of the clichés, or maybe just one more. Now is the time for action. Prepare and “*just do it!*”^{vii}

Isn't Using Pasteur's Guidance Time Well Spent?

About the Author

Dr. [Scott M. Shemwell](#) has over 30 years technical and executive management experience primarily in the energy sector. He is the author of six books and has written extensively about the field of operations. Shemwell is the Managing Director of The Rapid Response Institute, a firm that focuses on providing its customers with solutions enabling Operational Excellence and regulatory compliance management. He has studied cultural interactions for more than 30 years—his dissertation; *Cross Cultural Negotiations Between Japanese and American Businessmen: A Systems Analysis (Exploratory Study)* is an early peer reviewed manuscript addressing the systemic structure of social relationships.

End Notes

ⁱ <http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/like+a+chicken+with+its+head+cut+off>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/an-ounce-of-prevention-is-worth-a-pound-of-cure>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.biography.com/people/louis-pasteur-9434402>

^{iv} <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/9178-chance-favors-the-prepared-mind>

^v http://www.inspiringquotes.us/quotes/5gKP_YnM48Zpa

^{vi} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scout_Motto

^{vii} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_Do_It