

# Best Practices: Don't stop until it Rains

Copyright 2006 Michael DiLauro

By Mike DiLauro, CMA

*This article is reproduced with the permission of the author, **Michael DiLauro**. This article may be reproduced provided permission has been granted by Michael DiLauro and it is reproduced in its entirety with appropriate acknowledgement of the author, the source and a web link to [www.dilauro.ca](http://www.dilauro.ca)*

Did you ever read a self-help or personal development book? You know the type that I mean; they're the ones that offer *12 Steps!* or *Top Ten Tips!* for addressing everything from getting yourself organized, to becoming an effective manager, or better yet, a decisive leader. Just as an aside, have you noticed how being a successful manager doesn't quite cut it anymore? Have you noticed that being a leader is the hot concept *du jour*? What's this obsession with leaders anyway, and why is it that no one wants managers anymore? I mean, not everyone can be a leader. Don't we need, at least, a horde of followers, maybe a flock or two of stragglers, an odd-dozen wanderers and a few herders who are supposed to try and keep everyone pointed in the same direction?

But anyway, if you have read any of those books, tell me honestly, can you remember them having an impact? A long-term impact? Have you implemented any procedures, processes or techniques touted in one of those books that resulted in a significant, positive change in your personal or professional life? Did you stop worrying about who moved the cheese? Is your life now more purposeful? Did you sell your Ferrari?

Look, don't get me wrong. I read those books too. I find that they're great as a barometer of contemporary thought and they certainly serve a purpose by getting those of us whose noses are too close to the all-too-familiar grindstone to take a step back and reconsider things. At least for short time anyway. Then, as inevitable as our fading New Year's resolutions, and probably before we even know it, there we are with our noses pointed at that grindstone again. At least until the next book comes along.

So, for me, those books are a diversion, an intermission, perhaps even a thoughtful, academic exodus that gives us pause – and then let's us get back to our busy day. But has any one of them changed my life? Well, hardly.

Why is that? The obvious reason is that the "solutions" or "processes" espoused probably came about as a result of, at least a little, soul-searching and, most likely, a greater degree of experimentation. The principle characteristic, though, and the one that most of us miss, is that the practice – whatever it may be – being touted is generally a behavioral or strategic process that best meshed with that person's beliefs, about their choices and about their identity and mission.

In other words someone had a constraint, a problem - *an issue* - to solve or to overcome. That someone then came up with a successful process – a best practice, if you will – that was based on personal beliefs, on available choices, on attitudes, and identity and mission and purpose. The important thing to note is that the latter criteria (beliefs, attitudes, choice, identity and purpose) are crucial, if not always obvious, inputs at arriving at a best practice that is generally behaviour-based.

Now what if my beliefs and attitudes, my mission and purpose don't mesh with yours? Will your behaviour-based best practice work for me? Doubtful, very doubtful.

Don't believe me? That's OK because what I just explained isn't my theory. I didn't make it up. In fact what I just described to you, what I essentially introduced to you, was a brief foray, an initial scholarly sortie into a framework, called *The Logical Levels of Thinking*, which stems from a body of knowledge called Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP).

## Logical Levels of Thinking – a Primer

Practitioners of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) attest that, with the Logical Levels, you and I are capable of successfully ordering information and affecting change in our personal, social and professional lives.

Interestingly, just as Einstein opined that a solution to a problem cannot be found with the same thinking that created the problem in the first place, the Logical Levels maintain that no effective, long-lasting change at any given level of thinking can be accomplished without an elevation in thinking to, at least, the next logical level. For instance, a desire for change at the *Behaviour* level (the level at which we ask questions that start with the word “*what*”) cannot be accomplished if the thinking remains at the *Behaviour* level. To undergo a behavioral change requires a shift – an elevation – in thinking to, at least, the next level, which is the *Strategy* or *Capability* level. Therefore, to embark on a change in *what* we’re doing, requires an examination of *how* we’re doing it. And to affect a change in *how* we’re doing something, requires consideration of *why* we’re doing it. The hierarchy below illustrates, starting at the top, each element of the Logical Levels.

### **Seven Logical Levels of Thinking (from Louise LeBrun)**

**Purpose**  
(*Who else?*)

**Identity**  
(*Who?*)

**Choice**  
(*Which?*)

**Beliefs/Values/Attitudes**  
(*Why?*)

**Strategy/Capability**  
(*How?*)

**Behaviour**  
(*What?*)

**Environment**  
(*Where? When?*)

### **What it all Means**

Best practices, by definition, chiefly address – from a Logical Level perspective – thinking at the *Behaviour* and *Strategy/Capability* levels. My suspicion is that best practices only work for the persons or organizations that created them. And the reason they work for those organizations is not because of the behaviour or strategy inherent in the best practices, but rather because of the beliefs, the values, the attitudes and identity embedded in the practices.

Don’t believe me? Consider this.

In the late 1920s, a famous guitarist by the name of Django Reinhardt narrowly escaped with his life from a fire that engulfed his caravan. Although he fortunately survived the ordeal, he suffered terrible, debilitating burns to his left hand. The burns were severe enough to render useless his baby and ring finger. Undeterred, Reinhardt developed a guitar technique that incorporated the use of his two able fingers. He subsequently went on to great fame and attracted a rabid fan-base. Whether those fans were enraptured by his melodic improvisations or by his dogged victory over his obvious handicap, I’m not sure, but the fact is that Reinhardt, to this day is, in jazz circles, considered a guitar god.

Would you then conclude that, for students of Reinhardt’s music, his unique technique, based on his inability to make use of two fingers, be considered a best practice? Absurd! Preposterous! And yet, be aware that there indeed are musicians - Reinhardt wannabes - the world over, who readily wrap tape around, and therefore disable, two fingers of their left hand. Whether they do this in the hopes of emulating the Reinhardt sound, or

whether they feel somehow inspired by mimicking the great guitarist's liability is a moot point. The fact is that they ignore the beliefs, the identity and the purpose that led Reinhardt to develop his technique.

And that, effectively, is my complete point. The blind adoption of someone else's best practices also ignores the circumstances that caused that certain someone to develop the best practices in the first place. And this ignorance, in my view, is what renders so many best practices useless.

### **A Fable**

There once was an aboriginal tribe of rain-dancers that was renowned for its unique and unfailingly successful ability to manifest rain. Other tribes traveled for days and days to observe this successful band of rain-dancers. These other tribes noted whether the dancers circled clockwise or counter-clockwise, they studied their dance-steps, they committed to memory the dancers' chants, their eye movements and their manner of dress. Yet not one – not one – could duplicate this band's success. For as much as everyone observed and mimicked the rain-dancers' technique, there was one thing that no one noticed.

And it was simply this. Because of the tribe's beliefs, mission and purpose, when they started dancing, they continued dancing – and didn't stop - until it rained.

---

---

*Michael Di Lauro, CMA is a trainer & financial-management advisor. Michael graduated with his Bachelor of Commerce (Accountancy) from Concordia University & he acquired his Certified Management Accountant (CMA) designation in 1991. Mike discusses the Logical Levels of Thinking and, other thought-provoking topics in his "Minding Your Dollars and Cents" workshop. Visit his website at [www.dilauro.ca](http://www.dilauro.ca) to learn more about this and other workshops. Michael may be contacted by email at: [mike@dilauro.ca](mailto:mike@dilauro.ca).*

---

---