

# It's Not That Taxing

Copyright 2006 Michael DiLauro

By Michael 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).*

I was at a networking event last week and, after the mingling with a dozen or so people - after the greetings and the gossip – came the time for each of us to individually offer an infomercial about ourselves and our businesses. When my turn arrived, I rather informally mentioned that I no longer prepared personal tax returns. The reaction from at least a few of the people there was not unlike what you'd get from a group of unruly grade two kids who just discovered that there would be no summer vacations this year. The immediate reply from these inquisitive – and concerned - listeners was, “But what do you do then?”

Which is when it dawned on me - the presupposition that is. There exists, even among knowledgeable business owners, an overriding presupposition about the work that accountants do. And number one – with a bullet – on that list of presuppositions is the one that says that all accountants prepare personal tax returns for their clients. This makes for an interesting analysis of a client's thought process. Following their reasoning to its ultimate and final analysis, what then would people presuppose accountants did when it's not tax season? Do they – post-tax season - all shelter themselves quietly in their offices and bone up on the income tax act in preparation for next year's tax onslaught? Do they embark on an advertising and promotional campaign in the hopes of attracting an ever-expanding client base? Or do they, like a flock of slightly confused and contradictory Canada geese, all fly south for the summer?

Reflecting on those business owner's question (*What do you do then?*) got me to thinking, so what exactly is it that I offer? Of course, I can describe the software training and the consulting, the corporate tax work and the workshops. But I wanted to get past that and arrive at the really big question, which is, at the end of the day, what does it all really mean? What is it - over and above those obvious services - do my clients receive in return for their somewhat modest fistful of dollars?

I took a client out for lunch last week. For the first hour, or thereabouts, of our little rendezvous, we made small talk. We chatted. We dished. We yakked. We brought up the inane topics that generally get brought up during an innocuous business lunch. Hobbies and pastimes; NHL playoffs, personal golf scores and the probable fate of Tony Soprano; each subject was introduced and perfunctorily dealt with before being dismissed to a virtual scrap pile of spent subject matter.

Over coffee and dessert we talked about business, his business and, sometimes, mine. I asked the typical, not unexpected questions that an accountant asks of his client. Year-to-date numbers, comparative numbers and projected numbers. We talked about matters of efficiency and effectiveness and we talked about streamlining operations and getting control over costs.

Had it ended there, it would have netted in a somewhat leisurely, pleasant and generally insignificant event. But it didn't end there.

Given my training in NLP and in other esoteric programs provided by the wonderful people at The WEL-System Institute, I steered the conversation towards weightier issues. And I, as they say, de-cloaked first. I talked about my business plans and I recounted my deep appreciation for the arts, especially music and writing. I talked about what was meaningful for me, and how I intended to continue incorporating meaningfulness, mission and purpose into my business. That was, I explained, how I got a charge out of my career. That was, I explained, what made me look forward to my day.

Throughout my exposé, my client asked questions, solicited clarification and requested further explanation. The talk turned to his role in his business; his aspirations and his intentions. Because his was a family business, we talked about family systems and their commonality with a work environment. We identified different strategies played out in a family system –*Family Hero* and *Lost Child* - for instance. We talked about *The Logical Levels of*

*Thinking* and their application in a business setting. We discussed, not so much, the mechanics involved in making a decision about what to do and how to do it, but rather the *why*, and the *which* and the *who* of those decisions. I pointed out the difference between *who I am* and *what I do* and we explored the ways in which a disconnect in those statements could sometimes lead to uncomfortable, and potentially unpleasant, personal and professional circumstances.

What was planned as a 60 or 90 minute lunch meeting became a three-hour in-depth discussion on business planning, mission, meaningfulness and purpose. We parted with the agreement to meet again, and resume the discussion, within the next week or two.

As I was making my way back to my office, it was then that the realization came to me, and I remember myself thinking, "Oh so that's what I do for my clients."

---

---

*Michael DiLauro, WEL-Systems® Master Facilitator, Quantum TLC™ Facilitator, Certified Management Accountant, specializes in helping businesses and not for profit organizations consider a whole new view of what money and financial management is all about for them. Mike brings a creative, thought provoking and playful perspective to a topic that many find serious, tedious or unnerving. Mike enjoys his role as a financial writer and educator. He has developed a definitive Quick Books® training guide which is currently used in community college courses and his authored many articles. For more information about Mike's workshops and services visit [www.dilauro.ca](http://www.dilauro.ca).*

---

---