

Deck Chairs on the Titanic

©Gwen McCauley & Louise LeBrun, 2001

We love it when things turn out right! We feel good about our future our world and ourselves. The sun's a little brighter; the breeze just a little more refreshing. Small wonder that we decide to document our success so that we can repeat it.

As we grow, our desire/need to share this strategy with our colleagues and employees increases. We produce 'how to' manuals to ensure that we all have the game plan. We use our past success as the template for future endeavors. We point to historical achievement, using its parameters as guides and markers for tomorrow's adventures.

For a while, we may get lucky.... it works! Such a sense of peace and relief when we 'know' that things are under control and we have the answers. We get comfortable and lose sight of the importance of the bigger questions until....one day.....

It stops working. In the accompanying tension, we turn to what we know...to what we've done before that's worked. We move away from the discomfort of not knowing and bury ourselves in the history and habits of what was.

We search for ways to mold, or force, the problem to fit the solution we already have. When someone finds the courage not only to question our approach but to question our definition of the problem itself, we find ways to silence their inquiries or worse, dismiss them and relegate them to the sidelines. There is no room for new information, new interpretations, new definitions, all of which invite uncertainty, when we have the solution that's worked.

These approaches to building the future from the past may give us a false sense of security but they do not give us the opportunity to grow...to become....to engage life to the fullest, whether at home or in our business environments.

Perhaps the toughest step out of this conundrum is the one where we admit to ourselves and those around us that we don't know ...and we learn that our not knowing isn't a reflection of who we are. When our whole professional life has been based in the belief that "knowing" is the wellspring of success, stepping out and embracing 'not knowing' as a way of life feels intimidating if not downright suicidal!

We begin asking questions which have no readily available answers but which give us and those around us permission to consider new and "unthinkable" possibilities: how does keeping busy serve us? Who do I/my team/my company get to be by blaming others? What do I get to ignore by not sharing? What could we become by considering the impossible possible?

And remember Albert Einstein: "The problems of today cannot be resolved at the same level of thinking that created them."

About Gwen McCauley: Coach, educator, writer and veteran of the 'employee to entrepreneur' transformation process. With wit, wisdom and worldly experience, Gwen invites her clients on a journey of self-discovery, gaining clarity of purpose and increasing self-awareness and resourcefulness. Gwen brings a strong background as a corporate executive with extensive management experience to her work. She founded Odysseys Unlimited Inc. (OUI) in 1997 and is a co-founder of the WEL-Systems® Institute. Gwen has an MA in Human Systems Intervention from Concordia University and a successful track record as a coach, program leader and businesswoman. In addition to being a WEL-Systems Educator™, CODE Model™ Coach and Quantum TLC™ Facilitator, Gwen has studied Open Space Technology, Myers Briggs, Appreciative Inquiry, Generative Leadership and Total Quality Management. Gwen published her first book “The Alchemy of Energy: Exploring The CODE Model” in 2004 and co-authored “Sekhmet Rising: the restlessness of women’s genius” with 17 other women in 2006. She is currently working on her third book.

This article was originally published in Australian Business Magazine, January 2002 issue. You may reproduce it in its entirety with appropriate acknowledgement of the authors and a weblink to www.ouicoach.com.