

Choices + Consequences = Reality

By Jason Kleid, Executive Coach + Sales Strategist + Trainer

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When my wife and I were raising our children we started using a number of pithy sayings that covered different situations. Rather than repeating speeches our children had already heard, we would simply quote one of the family's sayings. I believe it was Einstein who once said, "The height of complexity is simplicity" and we agree.

In our household, privileges were taken away when house rules were broken. Try telling teenage girls they can't use their cell phones and experience the tension at the dinner table! Can anyone relate to this situation? Our girls acted as if they had been stabbed in the heart. "What do you mean I can't partake of my inalienable right to free speech? What are you thinking? This is unfair!" Now was the time for us to say, hopefully with some compassion, "You've created your own reality."

The message was clear. There are consequences for our actions. Our children needed to take responsibility for what had happened, become accountable and not blame us their parents for their new reality.

Whether you are running a business or are an employee or vendor, we all must live with the consequences of our actions. It may be easier to blame others, but at some point we must face the honest truth ...we create our own reality.

The world of coaching has many models that help coaches do their jobs. One is the concept of "*being, doing, having.*"

Many would agree that most organizations prioritize their efforts, focusing on the *doing* first, *having* second and then the *being* third (if they have time for it).

Well, as a coach I can tell you that if you don't focus on the *being* first, or concentrate on understanding your strengths, values, mission, what success looks like, etc., you will likely be *doing* the wrong things. Then you will end up *having* something you don't want: your new reality!

It may be challenging for us to take time to "sharpen the saw" as Steven Covey directs. Many of us don't have a clear view of how to sort out priorities and devote time and energy to the important aspects of our lives.

Let me illustrate how our reality can be affected by our own strengths and weaknesses.

Titanic Behaviors

With 16 watertight compartments in its hull, the luxury liner, Titanic, was considered unsinkable. On its maiden voyage in 1912, it carried roughly half the number of lifeboats needed. The ship struck an iceberg and sank, claiming over 1,500 lives.

This account teaches us that our strengths, when not balanced by wisdom, modesty, and humility, can easily become weaknesses or liabilities.

For example, a person who loves his work could easily turn this gift into a weakness by becoming a workaholic. That person might lose connection with family and friends resulting in a reality that might suffer from weakened relationships, anger, or hurt feelings.

Those who are cautious may not be easily fooled or deceived, but they may be cautious to the point of never making decisions. Opportunities pass them by and their situation doesn't change, or perhaps worsens. Fellow employees lose trust in their decision-making ability, which affects morale as well as performance.

Take an office environment where the office manager is a very efficient person. This strength has contributed to her success. She wants to help everyone she works with to be successful. So she becomes a micro-manager and demands that everyone do things exactly the way she has always done them. She becomes too pushy, domineering and bossy in the eyes of her employees. Although efficiency is a fine quality, if taken to the extreme so that it ignores the human element, the result may be a cold, rigid environment that breeds unhappiness. Work will suffer and people may leave.

This challenge of balancing our strengths could be compared to a performer who attempts to walk on a tightrope. Any loss of balance would be a disaster for him. Similarly, the loss of balance would be disastrous for us.

In order to maintain our balance, take some time to reflect on your own strengths. Gain a greater understanding of yourself. Are you extroverted or introverted? Are you people-focused or task-focused? How do those behaviors impact relationships, build trust and are they in alignment with your job and work environment? How adaptable are you when interacting with your co-workers' preferred communication styles?

Who Are You?

Seek to understand the WHY of your behavior. What drives you? What do you value? Are your decisions motivated by practicality and ROI? Is helping people, learning, or being in control the driving factor? Do you find yourself getting anxious when conversations are not bottom line-focused or focused on getting results? Are your values in conflict with others you work with?

What about how you approach the world? Being positive in our thinking affects our mood, our speech, our energy and others. Referring to the power of attitude, William James the great Harvard psychologist concluded, "The greatest discovery of his generation was that people were able to change their lives by changing their attitude of mind."

All of these areas impact our reality. If you understand why people are in conflict, you can work to resolve those issues and create an environment that is truly motivating for others. If we become self-aware, we can become self-correcting and our performance will be optimized. This leads to a better reality and having what we *really* want.

Remember, you create your own reality.

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