

Leaps, Falls and Trips into The Unknown

My Own Leap of Faith

I recall an incident when I was a dozen or so years less worn by the challenges of life and carried a little less evidence of prosperity on my mortal frame. I was standing atop a dam wall, looking down sixty something metres to my destination below.

It was a time during my military service and the event was something that the collective military wit called "Adventure Training". There I stood, tethered to the earth by little more than a piece of rope and a belief that holding my body in an unnatural posture would assist me to defy gravity and glide to the spillway below. This was my first taste of abseiling, an activity for which I still fail to see any practical application beyond traversing the Swiss Alps and padding out rescue teledramas.

For protection, I wore a helmet on my head. I wondered how this might help me should the gods of gravity decide to punish my novice efforts. I was fairly certain that the helmet would do little to guard against broken bones and mashed internal organs. Nor was the fact lost on me that the helmet would probably be the last thing to hit the ground if I were to fail in my endeavours.

Bravado, blissful ignorance and a barking Sergeant saw me sailing earthward with significantly more speed than grace.

It occurs to me that this very physical and potentially dangerous

activity has a lot of lessons for those of us considering a move from organisational servitude to the adrenalin pumping existence of the business owner or self-employed. We start out with ignorant optimism and learn quickly. If we learn the appropriate techniques in time we will survive, few may even enjoy the experience and prosper. In business and self-employment, we are truly responsible for our own success, as is the case with abseiling. There is no turning back, blame or denial.

Ability and Responsibility

I recently attended a workshop which had an unusually large number of diamonds amongst the dirt. The one notion that really impressed me was the idea that we all have an amount of talent but our success depends on the amount of responsibility we take for our situation and ourselves. This was a concept that struck a note with me. In business, as in life, we must take responsibility for ourselves and our actions and make the most of the talent we have been given.

Many of us put off the leap into business or self-employment for fear of life without a regular and guaranteed income. This security can in fact be a hindrance to our freedom and success rather than something that liberates us to achieve our real potential.



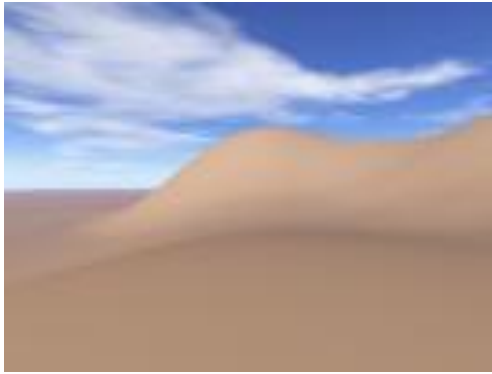
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An Oasis in the Far Distance

Many readers may have enjoyed or heard of the classic tale “The Richest Man In Babylon”. It is a collection of stories written by George Clason in 1926 relating to a set of principles that, if followed, can lead to financial success. It is my opinion that this is a must read for anyone who aspires to the accumulation of wealth.

Interestingly, there is a strong message of self-responsibility as a means of achieving financial independence. In one tale, a slave named Dabasir is challenged by his mistress, Sira, to choose his future. She asked him “Do you have the heart of a slave or a freeman?” He responded that he had the heart of a freeman and Sira demanded that he prove it. He did so and almost died in an attempt to return to his hometown. He set off, endured a desert crossing and reached Babylon to live life as a successful freeman who found great wealth as a merchant.

As a slave, he was not held by the bonds of physical chains and shackles but rather the invisible grip of relevant comfort and the knowledge that his basic needs could be met. This had the potential to rob Dabasir of his will to seek and find a much more rewarding and satisfying life.

Into The Unknown

At some time we all metaphorically stand at the edge of our own desert and dream of a far off oasis where we might find success and wealth. How many of us have the courage to break free of the shackles of our comfortable and secure existence and strike out into the unknown to seek a greater reward?

Now I’m not saying that self-employment or business is for everyone, far from it. Many people make a fine contribution in large organisations. I have, however, met many people who spent more time finding excuses for why they couldn’t free themselves from the corporate lifestyle, than they did working out ways of achieving their long term objectives.

We are all challenged at some time or another to traverse the unknown, regardless of our employment status. It is our ability to cope with unfamiliar situations and new challenges that enables us to learn and grow as people.

As an end note, I am happy to report that my first abseiling experience ended in relevant success. I make this claim on the basis that I was able to walk away from the scene with both helmet and dignity in place. I’ve not had the urge to challenge gravity since. These days it seems to be red tape, not climbing rope that gets the adrenalin going.

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