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Making room for 2010

By Jim Rives

January 1, 2010

A New Year is upon us once again -- full of expectations and promise.

Will this one be different? Will we really experience the fullness and rewards that we deeply desire? Why is it that as much as we desire these changes, we recognize a few days later that life is the same old thing? Does it have to be this way? The challenge is that we approach the New Year with the same old capacity and no room to take on new opportunities.

How does one increase capacity? There are two ways that this can be accomplished – whether for an individual or for an organization:

Letting go

Humans (and their organizations) have a propensity to keep themselves full. I am not speaking of food in this case but feelings, opinions, attitudes and information. The biggest reason that we are not able to move differently each New Year and sustain the changes we desire is that there is no space within us to keep something new. New computers become bogged down over time with cookies and unnecessary information that slows them to a crawl. There is plenty of speed available, but there is too much information to process. Our human capacity is similar and unless we let something go, there is no room for something else.

How does one let go? Unfortunately, as we move in the same places and the same ways we are not aware of anything we need to let go. Yet doing the same things the same way and expecting different results is not possible.

The first action is to become curious. What is stopping you or not allowing you to take on something new that you know would be great for you? Sometimes it is an attitude, an opinion or a misplaced belief. Allow your curiosity to go deep – which requires setting aside some time to be by yourself in a quiet space. Another way is to seek the input of a wise friend or coach/counselor. It needs to be someone trained and with demonstrated care and concern for your success.



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Remember that whatever it is that is inside holding you back, or filling you up so that you cannot take on something new, has likely been embedded for a long time. It did not become that way in a day and often takes more than one or two tries before you are able to let go. This is where the second action finds validity to sustain the change.

Building capacity

In addition to letting go, one can add capacity or space to sustain the new. Adding space does not happen just because one "thinks" it so. It takes new practices and ways of moving differently to do this. Last year I decided that I wanted to run a half-marathon. I am not a runner and never have been, but the occasion presented itself combined with a worthwhile cause. When I first began, I was pushing it to be able to jog for three minutes! But under the guidance of a great coach, I built

capacity in my physical body and respiratory system. Within a few months I was running the mile in under nine minutes. To be able to accomplish this I had to change my eating habits, exercise approach and attitude about running. Crossing the finish line in the half-marathon – and seeing the difference in my body – was very rewarding.

So it is when one wants to build capacity within. It takes new approaches and practices to be able to build the capacity to take on new commitments and opportunities. What practices one needs to take on depends on where you want to build the added space. While one can achieve a degree of success on their own, I have found that the best results can be realized when one finds a coach/mentor to guide and encourage them through the process. An objective and trained person can see your full potential as well as what is holding you back. I have yet to find a highly successful individual in life or in business who does not quickly give credit to a mentor or coach for much of their success.

As you approach the New Year of 2010, I invite you to let go of old ways that have not served you well and embrace new practices and attitudes that will expand your possibilities. Is the year full of promises waiting to be realized, or much of the same old thing? The difference primarily lies within you.

May 2010 be the year of significant change and much success for you personally and professionally!

Jim Rives is an Executive Coach to individuals, small businesses and Fortune 500 companies as the CEO of Executive Leadership Institute LLC. He can be reached at 520-568-6442 or jim@executiveleadershipinstitute.com.

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