

THE LEADERSHIP LENS Newsletter

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A monthly resource providing insight, opinion & practical information on life balance, creativity & perspective

When Less is Certainly More

My bag topped out at 32 kilos or about 70 pounds as I gave an innocent look to the ticket agent at BWI airport. I thought I was doing well as I had at least three extra inches of room depth for additional items inside of the bag. The ticket agent informed me that they weren't allowed to take on a bag weighing over 30 kilos, so I used my backup portable bag to transfer some of the weight. I needed to take a wide variety of items and clothing for activities that ranged from hiking and casual city clothing to the theatre plus all of my camera gear. I did manage to get 3 kilos into my backup bag, but I still had to pay \$30 for a heavy bag charge. Taking less 'stuff' on multi-week travels has always been a challenge, especially when my empty bag weights 12 kilos!

When I do travel, it gives me the opportunity to simplify. An older tee shirt gets tossed, a finished book is left at the in-laws and the original Bose noise canceling headphones get the black electrical tape upgrade. Writer Paul Theroux wrote an article in *Town and Country Magazine* reminding me of the power of simplicity. He talked about the Japanese term *wabi-sabi*, which basically means, "Pare down to the essence, but don't forget the poetry." He was extolling the virtues of technology, but at the same time reminding us to not be tethered to them. I'm not traveling with a cell phone and when I do go exploring, I take my film camera, as I left my digital one at home. This arrangement allows me to go into a city with my journal, one film camera and at most two lenses. I feel that by bringing less with me, I get to know the area where I am exploring and the people who make up the area that much better. Also, there is a sense of freedom to know that my thoughts in Battersea Park admiring the Peace Pagoda in London won't be disturbed by a computer generated ring tone.

Perhaps a fortunate result of the busted terror plot in London will be the simplification of what we can bring onto the plane in the form of carry-on baggage. I am sure that the items I brought over with me: my film camera, laptop in a backpack, lenses, tripod in a long case and a 1.5 Liter water bottle on a royal blue strap will resemble something very different if the new hand luggage restrictions become permanent. In an article in the *London Times*, the following articles are being banned right now out of Heathrow International Airport: handbags, books (possibly my journal), cameras, iPods, laptops, magazines, food, all liquids and nothing is to be carried in one's pockets. I tend to drink quite a bit of water when I fly as the cabins on airplanes are about as dry as the Sahara Desert. The less people working on their computers and PDA's might mean more conversations with their neighbors. When faced with the in-flight movie and the airline magazine for five or more hours, I might take up meditation instead.

Having less to do on a flight means we have the opportunity for a greater focus. We are less distracted. I know that I will be requesting paper and a pen to write down my goals or to design a poem. This mantra of less is more was evidenced two weeks ago when I worked with a financial company to simplify the presentations of four of their executives. I like to 'Begin with the End in Mind' if I can borrow one of Stephen Covey's 7 Habits. I asked each presenter this simple question. "If somebody in your audience heard you speak and they were interviewed by a newspaper reporter, what are the three things you would want that person to remember from your presentation?" Studies have shown that an audience remembers about 60% of a presentation after one hour, 40% after one day and only 10% after one week. We worked on those simple things that they wanted people to remember and then weaved them through each person's presentation. Another interesting development was the number of key phrases and messages that emerged from inside their presentations. The more we practiced, the more items bubbled to the surface and replaced the original key messages. Throughout the process, the presenters became more focused too.

Amazing innovations can occur in simplistic environments where people are more focused. In the MacDowell Colony, the nation's oldest and most famous artist colony, people work in isolated cabins that contain a bed and desk. Each studio has large picture windows and the studios are not equipped with the modern conveniences of Internet access, television, phones or radios. According to an article in the *Wall Street Journal* on the place, "Participants say the reduced distractions make them so productive that a week at MacDowell is the equivalent of four elsewhere. Novelist Mary Higgins Clark and composer Aaron Copeland both worked at MacDowell during an eight-week fellowship. When organizations send employees to MacDowell, employees are in an unconventional setting where distractions are reduced and connections across disciplines occur. This sparks an amazing amount of creativity and conversation all in a simplified environment.

This power of simplicity is further evidenced in photography. The more the simple shapes of the triangle, square and circle are used, the more powerful a photograph becomes. In my photograph, 'Windmills of Patmos' you can easily discern the triangles of the roofs atop the windmills and the square or rectangular shape of the buildings themselves. You can see this photograph at <http://www.staashpress.com/FineArtPOPUPS/51fp.html>. Some photographs will have all three shapes while others will just have one shape that is recognizable. The main reason why simple photographs are powerful is that we can focus on the subject in the frame and not get distracted by a busy background. Remember, the next time you take a trip, deliver a presentation or even take a photograph, the less that you have will make for a richer experience and it just might save you \$30.

About Mark Sincevich:

Mark Sincevich works with organizations that want to gain the power of perspective and those that want to sharpen their focus. He accomplishes this by bringing a unique photography angle to his creative keynotes, powerful presentations and meeting facilitation programs. Mark incorporates his beautiful and inspiring photography as well as the insight of working for over 17 years in various organizations into many of his programs. This background allows him to more easily relate to his customers. He is the founder of Staash Press, the executive director of the Digital Photography Institute and the developer of the Staash Perspective System (SPS). Mark is also the author of three books, is frequently quoted in the media, and his photography and articles have been published all over the United States. In between assignments, Mark can be found spending time with his family or writing in cafés with character. For more information please call 301-654-3010 or visit www.staashpress.com

Increase the power and focus of your presentations by booking Mark for his "Powerful Presentations" program!

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