

# THE LEADERSHIP LENS Newsletter

September 2004, © Mark Sincevich, Staash Press

*A monthly resource providing insight, opinion & practical information on leadership, creativity, balance & personal development*

## **Coffee for Character**

I enjoy exploring unique coffee shops whenever I travel. I like their openness, their relaxed atmosphere and of course their coffee. This uniqueness may come in the form of gourmet health food, live local music, faux painted walls, antique wooden tables and chairs, and maybe the best Sunday brunch west of the Mississippi. I have found that when I get great coffee, tasty food is not far behind. These coffee shops tend to be located near art galleries, restaurants with outdoor seating, and small boutiques. Coffee shops that have character are often near locations that offer even more character.

Why do I spend time looking for locations with character? It helps in the development of the person just like reading a good novel or having an engaging conversation. In the past, it felt very 'emotionally empty' going to meetings at an airport hotel conference center and then flying right home. When I started traveling to San Francisco, I wanted to tell people that in addition to business meetings, I had also hiked amongst the Redwoods in Big Basin State Park, sampled gourmet food at the Greystone Restaurant in Napa Valley, and drank excellent coffee at the University Coffee Café in Palo Alto. It was my desire for flexibility and originality that drove the quest to explore my surroundings. Besides aren't those people who have unique experiences a lot more interesting to work with?

This desire for personal flexibility is considered the number one work perk in a poll of 1,400 chief financial officers by Accountemps. According to Max Messmer, chairman of Accountemps and author of "Motivating Employees for Dummies," Lean staffing levels mean many employees are working longer hours. At the same time, a growing number of professionals must meet mounting personal obligations, including caring for children and elderly relatives." When employees are given the responsibility for their own schedules, they have the time to coach their child's soccer team instead of sitting in rush hour traffic, or time to visit a unique coffee shop instead of flying right home after a business meeting. Plus, some of the most creative ideas are generated when we aren't trying too hard and are engaged in other activities.

Last week, I had a photography assignment at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. I arrived early to explore the interior of one of the newest and more interesting buildings in Washington, DC. After I carefully arranged the area, I mingled with and then photographed the top sales performers of an international food company. It was inspiring to be amongst these dynamic individuals. Later, I secured my photography gear and walked a few blocks to the Smithsonian Castle Gardens. There amongst the ageratum and bacopa, I wrote in my journal. I turned off my cell phone and resisted the temptation to rush back to the office to check my E-mail. Turning off one's cell phone is something that top professional speaker Alan Weiss espouses. He said, "It is preposterous to be reachable continually, and it's rude to the people who actually occupy the physical space in front of you."

In a article from the *Wall Street Journal* called, "Workaholics Use Fibs, Subterfuge to Stay Connected on Vacation," a much-too-connected employee spent his vacation time 'driving in search of signal' while he was in Destin Beach, FL. He'd tell his family that he was researching the Internet for a restaurant later that evening. Instead he was answering E-mail and talking on his cell phone, but only after he drove an average of four hours per day to get to an area where he could be connected. By not being involved in exploring Destin Beach, this person clearly didn't have the time to develop his character or didn't take the time to create lasting memories with his family. If you practice not working while on vacation, it will be easier to take personal development time in between your travels too.

In order to develop your character while traveling, you need to do the following. Build in buffer time before and after your meetings so that you can engage in at least one non-work activity. This buffer time needs to be as important as any other high-priority work-related activity, so resist the temptation to schedule another meeting in this time. I allow a half-day to a full day for this buffer time depending upon the location. Ask the hotel concierge for a local map and have her point out a cool coffee shop, three unique restaurant recommendations and the location of some art galleries. This will give you a good indication as to those areas that have more character. If you have your computer, PDA and cell phone with you while on a business trip, turn everything off when you are exploring. I would not want to receive a cell phone call while admiring the tallest living things on this planet, the Giant Sequoia. It would interfere with my personal development, possibly prevent a great idea from popping into my head, and sidetrack me from finding a new coffee shop full of character.

## **About Mark Sincevich:**

Mark Sincevich is a photography expert who speaks professionally to organizations on creativity, balance, leadership and personal development. He is an active member of the National Speaker's Association and brings over 17 years of experience in high technology sales and marketing and public accounting into his programs. He doesn't just tell you how, he shows you how from having lived it himself. Mark mixes his diverse photography background with his business experience to create exciting and memorable programs such as keynotes, seminars, breakout sessions and facilitations for his customers. Mark has also been practicing photography for over 21 years and continues to sharpen his skills as an instructor at the Washington School of Photography. He has written two books and numerous articles. For more information on Mark's professional speaking programs, photography, books and CDs contact Staash Press at (301) 654-3010, [info@staashpress.com](mailto:info@staashpress.com) or [www.staashpress.com](http://www.staashpress.com).

**Make your next meeting productive, educational and enlightening by booking Mark Sincevich as your speaker.**

We will never sell or give away your personal information, and you can remove yourself from our list at anytime by replying to one of our messages with "Remove" in the subject line. If you would like to reproduce this article, please contact [newsletter@staashpress.com](mailto:newsletter@staashpress.com).