

Everything Wonderful is a Surprise

By Charles E. Smith Ph.D.

John Lennon said, *"Life is what happens while you're busy making other plans."*

I've spent a good part of my life making lists, setting goals, making plans and calling people up. Mostly, it's been a waste of time. Some years ago, I sold my company and in leaving, went through years of records, lists, plans, goals and phone calls. Nothing had come of almost all of them. Still, we had thrived, survived, and gone about our business more or less successfully. I began to wonder what was really going on. If most of my planning had made no difference, what did make a difference? Was good fortune a matter of leaving the window open so blue birds might fly in? Was most of the world's strategy and planning really bunk, no more than a way of suppressing anxiety about the future? Without my lists I felt shaky. Maybe that's all they were good for.

On the other hand, I'm clear that I am responsible for everything. Nobody else will bring the pork chops. But if planning does not produce wonderful results, what does? Maybe, *Everything Wonderful is a Surprise!*

I made a list of everything wonderful that I could recall happening around me and saw that in every case, it *was* a surprise, from selling a hundred thousand dollars worth of rugs, meeting my first girlfriend, my wife, great consulting referrals, the birth of my daughters and sons, great people wanting to work with me, and breakthrough-results in client companies. There was no apparent connection between my planning and whatever produced the wonderful outcomes. On those occasions when the outcomes were clearly derivative of the plan, it seemed ordinary, not wonderful.

This isn't entirely logical. If I planned to go to the beach and it was then wonderful, didn't the wonderfulness have something to do with the plan to go to the beach? I think not. I've planned to go to the beach many times when the experience was not wonderful. One plan to go to the beach was not better than another. Something else must have been going on.

My hypothesis is that planning is usually bunk and everything wonderful is a surprise. Wonderfulness happens somehow in the moment. This does not bode well for planning

departments. As [Joseph Jaworski](#), [Betty Sue Flowers](#), and [Peter M. Senge](#) asserted in [Synergetics](#) - miracles happened consistently in life and work when they “*let life flow through*” them.

It’s widely accepted that the biggest barrier to innovation in companies and governments is the suppressive effect of culture and leadership. Maybe Innovation is everywhere and all we are doing is getting in the way. Imagine if the code breaker in life and work is that *everything wonderful is a surprise*. Besides doing violence to bureaucracies, control freaks, policy wonks, and process re-engineers, *everything wonderful is a surprise* offers a possible new universe for business success and personal happiness that will never result from trying to make things happen

If you can accept this, here are some tips:

1. Let life flow through you. Don’t resist what happens. Stay open and possible no matter what.

- ([Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership](#), Joseph Jaworski, Betty Sue Flowers, and Peter M. Senge, Jan. 1, 1996)

2. Do your very best and don’t worry about the future.

- (Gil Hammond, Client and Engineering Director at Procter and Gamble, in a personal conversation.)

3. Trust that the universe grants what it will.

- (Frank Herbert in the [Dune](#) Novels)

4. Practice the power of now. All power is in the moment.

- ([Practicing the Power of Now: Essential Teachings, Meditations, and Exercises from The Power of Now](#) by Eckhart Tolle, Hardcover - Oct. 10, 2001)

5. Do only what attracts you. What's common to all successful and happy people is that they stay true to what attracts them.

- ([The Secret](#), by Rhonda Byrne (Nov. 28, 2006))

6. Put yourself in the place of greatest opportunity.

- ([Celebrate What's Right with the World](#), DVD with Dewitt Jones)

7. Do the right thing at the right time, no matter what you feel.

- ([Simple Truths: Clear and Gentle Guidance on the Big Issues in Life](#), by Kent Nerburn)

If Everything Wonderful is a Surprise is really true, then what?