

A Perfect Paradox

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My Doctor says that results are dangerous.

This revelation began when two weeks ago. I was experiencing shortness of breath and my heart skipping beats. I was anxious about a medical test, lack of success in selling a house, and traveling too much. A customs agent in Toronto Canada had just looked at me and said: "You should be retired and enjoying life. Why do you do this?" The next day a doctor and friend examined me, said I seemed okay but should see a cardiologist when I got home to be sure. A few days later, I went to a warm and insightful doctor in Leesburg Florida, near where I live. He examined me, said that I was fine, and we talked for a while about my life, lifestyle, and concerns.

He said in response that, "Results always cause tension." I asked whether he meant medical results and he said, "Any kind of result, anything you have to measure, has a negative effect on your heart rate, your heart, tension, stress, and eventually hypertension and potential heart attacks." I thought: people who live to be a hundred and ten years old don't seem to be concerned with results. They have been making baskets, art, music, or praying for rain. This insight is probably not good for business. While it may be both funny and true, it's far outside the world as we know it, and will not be popular. As an executive coach, this insight may lead to nobody ever hiring me again.

In the moment, I was aware of so many peoples' lives in companies, agencies, communities and families drowning in real and failed expectations of results. These are results that are not good enough, that have to be better next year, that we must have to survive, that promise you will get stronger, climb higher, look better, be thinner. Almost everybody is trying to produce results, thinking that they should, avoiding the stress of not doing it, or feeling bad if they don't try.

The people who evaluate results rarely have anything to do with producing them. Investors, bosses, politicians, commentators, financial communities that don't have to produce anything measure other people's results and keep the game going by motivating others on an electrified treadmill in the name of the greater good. All of this is dangerous to your health. It's no wonder people in easy-going cultures think we are crazy with all of our material success, too much anxiety, and so many heart attacks and strokes.

This treadmill has become a new kind of religion where the name of the God is Results. There is a powerful, rich culture of the devil's work when it comes to opposing Results. The opposing forces are human nature, laziness, bureaucracy, poor leadership, inadequate resources, competition, lack of time, politics, government, lack of training, getting old. And, as with religion, there are countless arguments about the best ways to produce the final goal, in this case Results. None of these arguments are ever conclusive

and all assure that the engaged conversation will never end. Finally, since results are always temporary, based on the most recent measurement, and you are immediately called to getting the next result, nobody ever wins. It's the same as needing to die and go to heaven before you find out whether or not you won.

Whose Paradigm is this anyway?

Executive Coaching is typically aimed at some kind of result from people whose results are not good enough for them, or for someone else. Maybe, we should sometimes shift to coaching someone to stop producing results so that they can have a life.

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