

CHAPTER 1

Carpe WOO!

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Is it possible that your life, business, relationships, energy, health, and balance can flourish as never before, despite even the most difficult of circumstances? Is it possible for you to build supportive, high-performance teams, even with those people you're pretty certain God put on the planet to bug you? Is it really possible for you to have more fun, a greater sense of purpose, and genuine peace of mind in a world accelerating so quickly that there is more computer technology in your children's Christmas toys than in the Apollo spacecraft that went to the moon in 1969? And is it even remotely possible that your family can actually flourish with unstoppable love and connection, despite the seemingly endless distractions of television, the Internet, Madison Avenue, cell phones, traffic, malls, and instant messaging?

The answer to these enormous, vital questions is WOO YES! Stop reading right now and yell out the word "WOO!" Isn't that a *fun* word? Now, if anyone asks you what you've been reading and thinking about, put a big grin on your face, look them right in the eye, and say . . . you've got it! WOO!

WOO stands for something very special. It is the *window of opportunity*, and with every ounce of my heart and soul, I want you to know that we all share the most important, magical, and magnificent of all WOOS right now! Do you know what it is? It is *every precious moment!* Every precious moment is a WOO. What do I mean?

You never know if the next person you meet today may become your lifetime friend, just as you didn't know it when you met your lifetime friends. You never know if the next woman you meet in an elevator may become the most important business builder you've ever recruited! You never know if the next time you talk with your son, daughter, spouse, or friend, something you say in that conversation may be the one crucial thing they could not see without your eyes, and a life that was on its way down is instantly reignited. You never know if the next idea that pops into your head may have the same impact on your own life.

I had a high school counselor named Mr. Anderson who pulled me into

his office in the ninth grade, sat me down, and with an intensity that surprised me because he was usually so lighthearted and jovial said, “Brian, a student like you only comes along about once every 10 or 15 years.”

At that time, it was pretty likely he meant it in a bad way more than he meant it in a good way! You see, I was at a point in my life where all I really wanted was for everyone to like me. So I was playing the clown, not applying myself anywhere near my potential. But Mr. Anderson saw through all of that. What he really was saying to me in that moment was, “Brian, don’t waste the gifts you’ve been given. Live *fully*. Put your heart into all that you do. When each day is done, know you’ve given all you had. That’s what really matters in life.”

And, you know, I *got* it! I would not be a part of this wonderful book right now had Mr. Anderson not seized that WOO so long ago! I never would have earned my way into Stanford University, never would have had my life move in the exciting directions in which it has flowed, and, most of all, would never have come together with my wife and children. The question is not “Is there a WOO?” There is! The real questions are: How many of those WOOs have we missed? And why do we miss them?

This chapter is about “seizing the WOO—*carpe* WOO!” As you learn to make the most of every precious moment, you will discover the secrets that will enable you to answer those enormous questions of life posed at the beginning of this chapter with a triumphant, resounding WOO YES!

CARPE WOO LESSON 1: WHAT YOU FOCUS ON IS WHAT YOU CREATE

Here’s a fun little question. What color is a yield sign? When I ask this question in my seminars I always hear the audience call out, “Yellow.” But many years ago the United States adopted the International Signage Standards, and the yield signs you and I have seen for all these years are not yellow. They are red and white!

I have a hunch you might be thinking something along the lines of, “Well, maybe they’re red and white out there in Asheville, North Carolina, where you live, Brian. But not here!” That’s exactly what I thought when I was in the audience at a seminar and was asked the question the first time. My answer was an immediate, “Duh . . . yellow!” But, son of gun, by the time I finished that seminar that day they managed to change every single yield sign I’ve seen ever since!

The truth is, we’ve seen thousands of yield signs. We very likely see the same yield signs almost every day when we drive our standard routes to work or school. And yet we haven’t seen one of them for what’s really there. Why?

The truth is we rarely use our vision to see! Instead we use our memory and our conditioning. The challenge is, when we use our memory to see, we don't see what's here now. We see the past.

Now, I hope you'll chuckle as I do every time I see a yield sign. But there are far more important areas in which to apply this understanding and use our present vision. Where does it really matter to awaken our true vision, and no longer depend on our memory to see?

I believe it's with *people*! Here's an example very close to my heart. My daughter Kelsey is 17 years old and drives her own car. The responsibility of driving has helped her feel more independent, confident, and mature. Yet every so often I treat her like an old yellow yield sign and look at her as if she's still 15. Every time I do, our relationship takes a step backwards and needs rebuilding.

The truth is—what we focus on is what we create! Those yellow yield signs were visual creations far more real to me than the actual metal and paint. The way we see ourselves and others determines the life we create and the messages we send to friends, family, and teammates. As you work with others building businesses with you, remember that one fresh idea, one unusual approach to breaking through a disabling habit, or one small victory can ignite exciting new momentum and results. Look for the best in others and you'll be much more likely to help create it!

CARPE WOO LESSON 2: IF IT'S NOT WORKING, TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT

You've undoubtedly heard that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over, and over, and over again—and expecting a different result! Yet how often does that silly definition perfectly describe our actions and choices? What habits do we continue to follow though the results they create are not only ineffective, but even painful, damaging, and self-defeating?

The more closely you look at this principle—if it's not working, try something different—the clearer it becomes that truly living its lesson provides a powerful WOO to ignite momentum where there once was stagnation, to transform adversity into exciting possibilities of benefit.

You need look no further than the light that's illuminating the room you're in right now as you read this book (unless you're outside on a sunny day) for shining proof of the power of this simple principle. The genius who developed the electric light, Thomas Edison, was the king of “if it's not working, try something different.” Edison was the Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, and Wayne Gretzky of innovation all rolled into one, with more than a thousand inventions and patents, more than any other individual in history. You'd

think someone who produced such astonishing results must have had a tremendous academic background, yet Thomas Edison had only three months of formal education. In fact, by his late teens, Edison had lost all of his hearing in one ear, with an 80 percent loss in the other. What Edison lacked in formal education and auditory capacity he more than made up for in tenacity, flexibility, and an unstoppable commitment to continually learn and grow. When speaking about the work going on in his laboratory in Menlo Park, New Jersey, he growled, “Hell, there are no rules here—we’re trying to *accomplish* something.”

When it came to his deafness, he turned that supposed handicap into an important ingredient in his success. He used the silence associated with deafness to sharply enhance his powers of concentration. Edison spent more than four years and experienced some four thousand failed attempts to create a functioning incandescent lightbulb. But after each unsuccessful attempt, he adjusted and tried something different. After more than three years and three thousand failures, one of his top assistants asked the great inventor how he could stand all the failure and lack of results.” Edison’s reply offers a surefire recipe for a life of wonder, light, growth, and resilience: “Results? Why, man, I have gotten a lot of results. I know several thousand things that won’t work.”

The most important place to apply this principle is in facing and dealing with fear. Ultimately, all emotions in life fall into one of two foundational categories: love and fear. The instant you choose the loving side, you feel it in every cell of your body. It is unmistakable. Mind, body, and spirit are in harmony. Life, joy, energy, and peace fill you and you know with certainty that the choice you’ve made is right. The physiological, emotional, and spiritual response when you choose fear is every bit as striking. There is immediate and inescapable dissonance as if the wrong key is struck on the piano. Every single individual who has given up on building a network marketing dream did so because of some form of fear! Your job is to help them break through and move from fear to freedom, from failure to faith!

So remember—if it’s not working, try something different! When you live this principle, you live with a constant sense of possibility because you know you can always try a new approach or strategy. Instead of feeling trapped as so many people do, you have a choice in every precious moment.

CARPE WOO LESSON 3: BE A WORLD-CLASS BUDDY THANKER

A great strategy for building an unbeatable team is to become a world-class buddy thanker. When you live with an attitude of gratitude, it becomes

natural to catch others doing things right. But let me ask you an eye-opening question. Who are the people in our lives we tend to forget to thank the most?

I've asked this question in every seminar I've ever taught, and have always heard similar responses. The people we most often forget to thank are those to whom we are the closest—our spouse, children, parents, or the people we work beside every day. When triggered by the question, we see how easily we can fall into the habit of taking the people we love most for granted. We can rationalize that we don't need to tell the prized people in our lives how we feel about them because they should already know, but the end result of neglect is decay and diminution. The more we fall into the habit of taking others for granted and withholding our appreciation, the more disconnected we become from the countless blessings in our lives.

How do you reverse this downward cycle and become a world-class buddy thanker? The secret is found in the words *world class*. After all, isn't that the kind of business you'd like to build, one that was viewed as world-class?

Here's a fun and easy way to remember how to become a world-class buddy thanker. When you think of world-class amusement park entertainment, who do you think of? Usually the answer is Disney. When you think of world-class coffeehouses, who do you think of? Sure, Starbucks is at the top of the list. Now, when you think of world-class sports television, who do you think of? That's right, ESPN! How do you become a world-class buddy thanker? Easy . . . just remember ESPN.

The E stands for effort and energy. World-class buddy thankers bring higher levels of effort and energy to the way they express appreciation and praise. They are more heartfelt, creative, and vibrant. They seize the WOO to give third-party compliments that allow other key people to hear of the performance, adding a touch of extraordinary personal attention to the praise that makes it more special and memorable.

But the real key to mastering the E in ESPN is to thank people for their effort and energy, *not* just their results. The truth is, we don't control results. We control the effort, energy, and attitude we apply to work toward results. When you thank others for their effort and energy, guess what? They create more results! Why? Because now they are focusing on what they control rather than what they don't. In 27 years of coaching basketball at UCLA, the greatest coach in history, John Wooden, never used the words *winning* or *losing* with his players. Instead he taught them that success is the peace of mind that comes from knowing you've given the best of which you're capable. In other words, he focused his coaching on his players' effort and energy. That unique focus led to 10 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) championships. No other men's coach in college history has won as many as four! That same simple principle is here for you right now.

The S in ESPN stands for surprise. This is the least known and one of the most powerful leadership tools you have available to ignite others. Write personal cards to friends, teammates, clients, and family members expressing your gratitude and admiration even when it's not their birthday or anniversary. These expressions will delight the recipients, and they will once again know they are important. E-mail (which stands for energy mail!) and voice mail provide fantastic opportunities to give compliments and to say thanks. Create moments for the special people in your life by giving unexpected gifts, arranging surprise events, or simply holding spontaneous, unexpected award ceremonies. You will light up others and the result will be extraordinary loyalty, commitment, and fun!

The P in ESPN is the most important key to becoming a world-class buddy thanker. In fact, it is the ultimate secret to balance, connection, and trust. The secret centers around a simple, yet immeasurably profound, principle called being fully present.

Perhaps the most powerful way to understand this principle of being present is to look clearly at what it is not. Several years ago, when I was the vice president of a large training company, I became painfully aware of what it means to not be present. At that time, we were a family of three: my wife Carole, me, and our first daughter, Kelsey, who was five years old. Driven by an unrelenting, nearly suffocating feeling of being overwhelmed, I had fallen into the habit of reaching the office by 5:00 A.M. and not returning home until well after 6:00 in the evening. Many weekends I was away, teaching seminars around the country. Not once did I see my daughter get ready for kindergarten. Not once did I surprise her by picking her up from school to spend some special, unexpected moments together. I mistakenly convinced myself that I didn't have time. I had to be at the office first and had to put in more hours than anyone else. After all, I was driving myself for my family, wasn't I?

When I trudged wearily through the door at 6:30 each night, Kelsey ran to me the instant I appeared in the house. She threw her arms around me and told me how much she loved and missed me as she looked into my eyes with pure joy. She then began to tell me all about the wonderful things that happened to her all day—special, magical things that only happen when you are five years old.

And I missed it—I didn't hear a word she said. You see, when I walked in that door, my body showed up. But my mind, my heart, and my spirit were still back at the office. The most important people in my life were right there at home waiting for me, and I never really saw them or heard them when they most needed me because I was not present.

This went on for months until one morning as I drove in to work, I suddenly realized what my lack of presence was communicating to my wife and

child. In that excruciating moment, it felt as if someone had bashed me full force in the stomach with a sledge hammer. It's been said, "What you do screams so loudly I can't hear a word you're saying." Nothing screams so loudly as our presence or lack of presence. Every evening when I marched blankly through my front door, my thoughts still focused on the day's events, I expressed to Carole and Kelsey much more clearly than through words that they were not as important as all those other matters. As I continued to drive that morning, all I could see in my mind were Kelsey's shining eyes so filled with love. I was overcome with suffocating feelings of remorse and loss. Sobbing uncontrollably, I finally recognized how many precious moments of connection I had lost with her and Carole by not being present. I understood for the first time that there was nothing more important to me than becoming a master of being fully present for those I love. It was time to make the choice to come home.

By being present, we let others know at a heart level how important they truly are. This is our greatest opportunity as parents, friends, professionals, and caring human beings. When others feel important they begin to live up to their potential. Our presence breathes faith, belief, and positive expectation into their souls. Without this presence, we cannot truly give.

Being present is not something you can fake. It is not a technique. It is a decision. Do you know whether someone is actually fully with you in mind, body, and spirit? Can you even tell over the phone? The answer is clear. We have a definite sense of whether others are right there with us, giving full concentration or drifting off and not truly connected. When we make the conscious and consistent decision to be fully present to the very best of our ability, we open ourselves to more joy than we've ever imagined and create the possibility to make the difference for which we were put on this earth.

Finally, the N in ESPN is simply to do it *now*. The street sign with the words "as soon as" leads directly to an endless loop called "never." Seize the WOO *now*! It is the one sure way to leave regret in the past. You may never pass this way again. If you knew you had only 24 hours left in your life, who are the people you absolutely could not leave before telling them how much you loved them, how much you appreciated them, and how much they mean to you? And my final question: What are you waiting for?

Remember: The past is history,
 The future a mystery.
 The gift is now—
 That's why we call it the *present*!

Brian Biro is one of the nation's foremost speakers and teachers of leadership, possibility thinking, thriving on change, and team building. A major client who has had Brian back to speak several times offered perhaps the most on-target introduction about Brian's impact when he said, "Brian Biro has the energy of a 10-year-old, the enthusiasm of a 20-year-old, and the wisdom of a 70-year-old." He is the author of the internationally acclaimed *Beyond Success*, *The Joyful Spirit*, and *Through the Eyes of a Coach—The New Vision for Parenting, Leading, Loving, and Living*. A former corporate vice president, Brian was rated number one by more than 40 speakers at four consecutive *Inc.* magazine international conferences. With degrees from Stanford University and UCLA, Brian has appeared on *Good Morning America*, CNN's *Business Unusual*, and the Fox News Network. He lives in Asheville, North Carolina with his wife Carole and their beautiful daughters, Kelsey and Jenna.

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