

1

Thank God It's Monday!

A leader doesn't just get the message across—a leader is the message.

—Warren Bennis, authority on organizational development, leadership, and change

Things just *felt* different.

When I walked through the doors of O'Connell Consulting, a familiar face caught my eye. I approached her desk and noticed how the mahogany gleamed. The crisp sign on it read CHRISTINA SUAREZ, ADMIN. ASSISTANT.

Christina welcomed me: “Good morning, Bruce.” She looked bright, relaxed. “You're here early. Can I get you anything?”

Of all the changes I had seen in this company, none could match the transformation Christina had made. Her hang-dog expression I had encountered on my first visit had vanished, the boxes of unfiled folders cluttering the entryway were gone. She replaced the obstruction they

considered a receptionist desk with one much more aesthetically pleasing and inviting, and the air of resignation and “why bother?” was history.

Christina spoke animatedly, without a trace of the mumbling I experienced when I first met her. She made me feel welcome, the way someone would greet you at a casual party. It was delightful to see her new and improved demeanor—a powerful indicator of the revitalization that had taken place here.

“I don’t need a thing, Christina. It’s great to see you, though,” I remarked, returning her warmth with my own. “You make it such a pleasure to be here,” I said and meant it from the bottom of my heart. There was that smile again as she picked up the phone to tell Richard O’Connell, the company’s chief executive officer, that I’d arrived.

When Richard and I began our work together six months earlier, the company he had created, nurtured, and loved for 15 years was uncomfortably close to bankruptcy. The nerves of the staff were frayed, the management team was at each other’s throats, the support staff whispered their contempt for the whole organization, and almost everything seemed lost.

Today, a mere six months later, everything *was* different.

Richard was waiting for me, Christina reported, so I made my way toward his office. In the hallway, a confident, upbeat, impeccably dressed woman strode in my direction. “Well, good morning, Bruce. You’re looking dapper,” Tonya Swanson said and extended her hand. She complimented me on the look of my suit and patted me on the shoulder as we shook hands. Another remarkable change: When I’d first met her, Tonya had been the most negative member of Richard’s inner circle, despite being a highly talented vice-president. Now, she exuded creativity and positive energy in whatever she did. Instead of avoiding Tonya, people now flocked to her.

Certainly, Christina had made the most dramatic leap, which was vital to the company’s success, since Christina was the first voice and face anyone encountered. But Tonya’s transformation from “drain to gain” was one of the most important reasons that O’Connell Consulting recorded its highest revenues ever the quarter following my work there.

I said goodbye to Tonya and continued down the corridor. Soon I passed Don Taylor's office, and there he was, diligently tapping on his keyboard. His expression was so different from the "old Don": He looked positively absorbed. When he glanced and caught me staring at him, he winked and got back to what he was doing. I interpreted that to mean he was, indeed, fully engaged. As I stood there a few seconds longer, I remembered all too well having seen him "working" too hard and constantly frustrated with nearly everyone he was managing. Now, he was more efficient, effective, and finally enjoying his job, as if it was no longer drudgery. He also enjoyed leading the staff members who reported to him, whom he now referred to as his *partners*.

Only six months earlier, when Don's energy reminded me of a cannibal on steroids, no one would have believed that he would become the company's most inspirational figure and a driving force behind the company's success.

Almost at Richard's door, I was nearly trampled by Kyle Pennington, who was about to fling open the door to his boss's office. Papers in hand, the newly appointed director of sales still had his headset on, cord dangling, recently detached from a phone, no doubt.

"Sorry, Bruce. Didn't mean to cut in front of you," he said, as he applied a firm handshake and continued to dash ahead of me. "But I've got some good news for Richard. Won't be but a minute."

While I waited outside the office, through all the commotion and "positive energy" welcoming me, I noticed Kyle's predecessor was nowhere to be seen. His wasn't among the many smiling faces greeting me today. *That's about right*, I thought. In my time there, I didn't recall ever seeing that man smile or get excited about anything.

Kyle zipped out of Richard's office almost as quickly as he entered, which meant it was my turn to see the boss.

My client sat at his desk, reading the first-quarter report that Kyle just handed him. Richard already knew the results, so the enthusiastic perusal I witnessed was an acknowledgement of the dramatic success his company had achieved.

"Grab your chair, my friend," he said.

For a moment, both of us remained quiet, each unwilling to interrupt with words what we both were now experiencing: an easy yet electrified silence filled with anticipation and no small amount of wonder.

“How does it look?” I finally asked Richard as I sat down, nodding at the report and grinning at him. But we both knew I meant much more than that.

Richard seemed half-ready to jump out of his chair and perform the end-zone dance of a lifetime. But his response was understated: “It looks really good, Bruce. In fact, I’m tempted to say it’s almost perfect.”

Today was the date we decided on at our first meeting to review our progress and celebrate the company’s dramatic turnaround; a day we long hoped would come. It served as a testament to a few simple and important facts: Richard’s company still existed, was still viable—and was *prospering*. From here on out, a whole new world of possibilities opened up for him, as well as for every one of his employees. And employees like Christina, Tonya, Don, and Kyle were clearly aware of it.

Now it was my turn to play: “So what else is new?” I asked rather casually.

“Very funny,” Richard replied. He looked out his window, which opened on a lush green hilltop. But his gaze seemed to stretch much farther. “Where should I start?” he asked, as much to himself as to me.

Richard began by telling me that the past six months had been the most challenging, revealing, and intriguing of his career. O’Connell Consulting had gone from nearly having to close up shop to now making record profits. He reminded me that six months ago he’d thought he’d have to replace his management team or go under and lose the company and dream he had worked so hard to create. Instead, the management team had become a powerful force for guiding people and change. The fear of closing shop was not even an option. His team was now fully invested and engaged in helping him grow the business and consistently creating a work environment that was highly positive.

Richard paused, as if he needed a moment to fully take in what he had just shared. Then his review continued: “My support staff is not only pro-

ductive, but they communicate and solve problems together. I'm not just guessing when I say that they're fully engaged and happy, too. I can see it on their faces and feel it in the air."

The fact that he mentioned this last observation demonstrated a significant transformation in his own level of awareness. In the past, Richard would have been so absorbed with his own "stuff" that he wouldn't have even put his feelers out or concerned himself with others' level of engagement. He would have just assumed that people were slacking off, taking him and the company for a ride, causing trouble, and making his job impossible.

Nowadays, he said, he was meeting with every one of his staff regularly. The staff had changed, too, of course. Instead of using him as a dumping bin for problems, his people now were proposing solutions, reviewing objectives achieved, and setting new goals for the future.

"Our entire organization is finely tuned. In fact, we're experiencing—no, we're *creating* new growth in a competitive marketplace," he said.

Richard wasn't finished. Looking me in the eye, he said that the most important change, however, was not within his company. It was within himself. He told me he now knew who he really was: "I'm an effective leader who's crafting a purposeful and powerful life."

Richard seemed almost surprised to hear himself say it. He then disclosed that he thoroughly enjoyed coming to work each and every morning these days.

"Oh, there's one more thing: My wife," he added, smiling, "says I should give you more money."

We both sat back, amused. Although it was a lovely sentiment, we both knew I was not the source of this company's turnaround or of the differences his wife was seeing at home.

What had happened in Richard's company to account for the changes he reported? Was it his coming into the office earlier, so that he didn't feel rushed to catch up right from the start of his day? Was it the individual attention he gave his employees each morning, or the weekly updates he was now receiving promptly from everyone? Was it his employees'

thank-God-it's-Monday attitudes that seemed to open a world of limitless possibility?

In our work together, we had implemented various processes, and I had helped him gain some critical new understandings about how people work together. This, and many other factors led to what he was describing to me. Yet, none of these was the main cause of the miraculous transformation in Richard's business over the past six months. These positive developments were actually *effects* of the change, not causes.

What really changed? It was Richard himself.

Six Months Earlier . . .

When I first walked into Richard's office for our initial coaching session, I had to avoid a minefield of boxes as I made my way to the first person I saw. Patiently, I waited for the mystery woman behind the tall, cluttered reception desk to address me. She ignored me and continued to type, so I entertained myself by imagining I was invisible. For what seemed like several minutes, I got lost in a reverie, picturing all the amazing things I could do if no one could see me. Alas, she finally spoke.

“. . . help you?" the woman whined, barely audible. She sounded like she had been anesthetized and was dreading her impending operation.

I told her my name, and she turned to her phone with a sigh. She dialed Richard to let him know "Bruce Somebody" was there. She said nothing more but did manage to point in the direction of his office, for which I was most grateful.

Richard greeted me with a level of enthusiasm that exceeded the receptionist's, but not by much. (If you haven't figured it out, the whiny woman was none other than Christina Suarez.) Numb and barely communicative, Richard's energy was more like that of a patient in the recovery room, hardly able to speak coherently. After some disengaged pleasantries, he made his desperation clear. He told me that if he didn't

do something radical to turn his company around, it wouldn't be in business much longer.

Richard made it clear that I was his last resort: "I don't know what else to do. A coach seems like as good an idea as any. When I heard about you, I decided I'd give it a try. At this point, we really don't have much left to lose."

Get This

You can become a powerful leader of your company and your life. To get you started immediately, I'd like to introduce you right now to the first of five *empowerment principles* that shape every interaction in this book.

The first principle is so powerful that discovering and applying it can change your entire life.

Here's the first part of the principle: **There are no problems. There are no challenges.**

That may sound like unvarnished positive thinking, but it goes deeper than that. Consider this: Problems and challenges are *creations of a fear-based perspective* on life. When we transcend fear, what remains is *opportunity*.

Okay. You may still be thinking, *That's it?* Yes, sort of. The secret is that the principles I'll be sharing with you *energetically resonate* at a level of success. And remember that conceiving something isn't the same as believing. And believing isn't the same as *implementation*, something every businessperson knows already.

The real power comes in living a principle like this *as truth*.

(continued)

This is why, although Richard's situation seemed bleak at the outset of the story, I was still more than willing to go forward and see what might be created out of what he perceived to be a mess—the mother of all business failures—his own personal code red.

One thing was piercing through his cloud of condemnation: O'Connell Consulting was poised for a miracle.

Empowerment Principle 1

Life offers neither problems nor challenges, only opportunities.

Energy Leadership Training Video 1

This is the first of the many bonuses that we are happy to be able to share with you. Please watch the video: *Walking the Talk* (at www.iPECcoaching.com/EnergyLeadershipBonuses), which will help you learn how to live the empowerment principles and raise your energy, accordingly.

Why Bother?

I have encountered entrepreneurs before when they reach the point where they wonder what on earth could possibly help, and doubt that there's even an answer. I let Richard know that his feelings were normal. Even though our current situations were far different, I could see myself in him, and I felt an eerie similarity.

Although it seems as if it was a past life, I, too, remember thinking that nothing I did made a difference. This was back in my teen years, a time when I felt like I had no direction or purpose in my life. I alienated myself from all groups and social cliques. To be honest, I stayed away from

almost anyone who breathed. I felt quite different from others and angry at virtually everyone else for being what I desired to be: noticed. I created a world that demanded violence and defied authority, and then I staged a complete revolt against any type of spiritual practice. (I now believe this was my way of trying to generate whatever attention I could muster.)

Just before I started college, a drunk driver killed himself and nearly killed me as he got on a highway in the wrong direction and drove into oncoming traffic. The head-on collision left me badly broken and barely breathing. Later, one member of the ambulance team told me of the astronomical odds against my surviving that accident, and when word got out about it, I became known as a “living miracle” in my hometown of North Brunswick, New Jersey.

All the attention I could ever have desired was then available to me. Oddly, that powerful experience taught me that I didn't need it. The attention and accolades meant nothing, and I turned away from them and toward something much more meaningful. I knew then something that I always remembered since: Everything I do matters, and everything I am matters even more.

In 1978, I was given the gift of life for the second time. At that point, I decided to make it a life worth living.

The accident became the impetus behind the eventual creation of all of the work I do, and much of what I would share with Richard over the time we'd work together. It had taken decades to develop.

As I told him, what you're about to learn is not just some training to implement with employees: It's a way of life.