



ITS ALL ABOUT PEOPLE

## TESTED AND FOUND WANTING

**I want it all, I want it all, I want it all.....and I want it now!** The Queen song, We Are The Champions, released in 1977, reached number 2 in the charts and stayed there for 3 weeks, probably because the lyrics, with their message of overnight status and success, appealed to the first generation that related to that concept of instant gratification. Remember Gordon Gecko, Thatcherite economics, fast-tracked promotions, Black Friday,, executive burn-out at 25 and the credit card that took the wanting out of waiting? All a phenomenon of the personal trainer, personal computer, personal satisfaction era of recent times.

And it hasn't peaked yet. Only this week one of my consultants came in to my office to ask if we could accommodate a request from a client. The client wanted a psychometric test that would provide them with a surefire result that an employee would be a good one. I felt like reaching into my bottom drawer, pulling out my 5-year money-back guarantee and full service warrantee and saying try this one. The consultant had been asked this question by her frustrated client who admitted that they keep getting their recruitment and placement wrong, even though they were conducting competency-based interviews and following a standard likely to bring success in recruitment processes. And now they needed a quick fix.

It is amazing how in business and in life we still try to look for the superglue solving of difficult problems – a couple of drops, hold the 2 sides together for 60 seconds, the break is mended and the bond is tight. It's almost as if we are programmed to seek out the shortcut in everything we do. But they are no truly trustworthy quick fixes, no emotional or commercial superglue – and deep down we know it, or ought to. Life is about what you put in being directly proportionate to what you get out but I can't help thinking that that old saying is no longer respected in our modern lives where doing as little and trying to maximize as much, is more the order of the day.

But shortcuts are the way this generation lives their lives. Ask someone my age what a shortcut is and they are likely to explain that it's to do with cutting corners, saving a bit of time by skipping long-winded or unnecessary parts of a process. Ask the same question to the young, emerging generation and he/she will tell you it means that instead of edit, copy and paste you just go Ctrl

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Shortcuts are the new chic – and in fact they are no longer even thought of as problematic any more - it's just the way things are done. Why waste time writing letters when you can e-mail? Why e-mail when you can text? Think about it. Even finding partners and forming relationships has been streamlined. Before there would be endless introductions or matchmaking, protracted dinner dates, meeting new acquaintances at social events, the whole 'getting to know you' scenario. Admittedly it was a long process but these things were supposed to take time, to mature, to blossom. Now everyone cyber-dates. Anyone you might want to meet is online and you can trawl through hundreds in a night without expending any energy at all. Instead of having to do all the social niceties and deal with awkward moments, misunderstandings, good and bad vibes, stolen glances, coupling and commitment, it's 'this is what I look like, what I like and what

I want' – click and send and how was it for you? Pretty much I want it all.....and I want it now – just taken a step further to include sex as well as the six-figure salary. And if even that's a bit too time-consuming there's speed dating. This is done face-to-face instead of in cyber space so it eliminates the chances of being duped by an air-brushed photo – imagine how much time and effort that would waste.

Instead take part in a high-speed game of musical chairs, close encounters where the clock is ticking, 5 minutes to make an impression or make an exit – not interested? Time up and change partners. Instant assessments - not enough body, don't care for the bouquet, very fruity overtones, pleasing on the throat – it's just like a wine tasting. Sometime you find one you really like, sometimes you settle for a couple that might grow on you.

The hustle, hassle and bustle scares me, the clinical, cynical emptiness saddens me and the feeling that quality and old fashioned values are being replaced by issues of efficiency and optimal output depresses me. Everything is going so fast that instead of the shortcuts giving us more quality time we just squeeze more quantity in.

So what happened and where have we gone wrong? Clearly we are not prepared to delay gratification. and this wanting it all now only satisfies us as long as it takes till the next instant need and its fulfillment. We are constantly putting short-term results first at the expense of long-term success and prosperity. But delaying gratification, accepting the idea that something is worth waiting for and that it takes time to achieve it is important. Psychologists at Stanford University put pre-school children alone in a room with a marshmallow.

The children were told that they could either eat the one marshmallow in front of them straightaway or wait, and receive two marshmallows instead. One-third of the children were able to wait the full 15-20 minutes in anticipation of that second marshmallow. The researchers followed up with the students 14 years later. The students with the willpower to wait it out scored higher on their SAT tests and were more emotionally stable than their weaker-willed peers.

I can remember having to wait forever for an increase in my allowance or having to reach the magic age when I was allowed to stay up after 8 o'clock when I was growing up. Yet with my own children I don't impose these disciplines and milestones. They have not been taught to wait till they are grown up until they get grown up privileges. But if we allow our kids to mature too fast we are not teaching them how to place long-term wellness before short-term highs.

Back at work I am watching an interview process. I am not doing the interviewing, but I do see the resumes. Several of the applicants don't have the experience necessary. As I listen to others discuss the candidates, they bemoan an attitude of entitlement that a degree alone entitles an applicant to a mid-level management job. Forget learning from previous jobs. Forget climbing the corporate ladder, slobbering kisses on bosses' backsides. I am witnessing a generation who are not prepared to wait, a generation who want it all, want it now and want it for free...

Each year, thousands upon thousands of graduates expect mid-level jobs and money with entry-level skills, education and experience. They are a product of their generation, of their new nurture and nature. For them it will a hard lesson to learn the necessity of delaying gratification to genuinely achieve, earn or learn so that when they do advance, they do so because of their actions, choices and wisdom. To reverse the slogan that sold the Access card and with it an entire new look on life – to take the wanting out of waiting and remind them of that old saying 'I want doesn't get'. At least, not immediately!

