

July 2005

To Hell with Reasonable

By
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"The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man."

George Bernard Shaw

I'm an unreasonable man. I admit it. In fact, I would say I'm happiest when I'm at my unreasonablest, if I may coin such a word.

This is not news to anybody who knows me. One of the greatest compliments I received came from Tom Conley, CEO of the Toy Industry Association, when he said, *"You can make a board of directors extremely uncomfortable faster than anybody else I know."* I almost cried (with joy) when he said that.

Don't get me wrong. I want Kelly to be a good kid and she is. She's an outstanding kid – straight-A honor roll, wickedly funny sense of humor, takes karate, plays both the piano and flute, golfs with Mom and Dad on Sundays, performed Shakespeare last Saturday, lives and dies with the Seattle Mariners, reads like a fiend, loves her grandparents... well, you get the picture. She's a great kid and I couldn't be prouder.

It's not Kelly I'm unhappy with. It's her school.

Her school rewarded the "good" kids with an end-of-the-year party. They rewarded those kids who didn't rock the boat, who toed the line, and adapted to the school's rules. In other words, her school rewarded the "reasonable" kids.

I know, I know. Organizations, like Kelly's school, need rules to survive and succeed. I'm not advocating anarchy. Rules are good.....to an extent. It's when rules create conformity that I get bugged. Conformity is boring. Conformity slows progress. Conformity makes cowards of us all.

Breaking the rules is pretty much a prerequisite for progress. Yet Kelly's school (and much of society) not only preaches conformity to rules, they **reward** it. And what gets rewarded gets done. That's where I have a problem. This penchant to conform is ingrained at a young age and stays with us throughout adulthood. Entire industries, massive corporations, and international organizations follow unwritten orthodoxies.....rewarding conformity....ultimately

creating white bread blandness, until some upstart wrecks havoc breaking industry-wide “rules.” Only then do people realize the danger of conformity. For many it’s too late.

That’s why I felt good about Tom Conley’s quote. Conformity breeds comfortable complacency - a state of satisfaction with status quo. And people don’t change if they are satisfied with the way things currently are. But that’s when they are most vulnerable.

History does not tell tales of reasonable men and women. George Washington. Mahatma Gandhi. Joan of Arc. Martin Luther King. Susan B. Anthony. Sam Walton. Ted Turner. Steve Jobs. Even Jesus Christ. All unreasonable people.

It’s important to be unreasonable. It’s important to be unreasonable *all the time*. Only then can you see opportunities for true progress.

I wish Kelly’s school had some sort of reward system for the kids who were a little bit unreasonable. Why not?

About Steve Miller

Steve is Kelly’s Dad and a really good strategic handyman. He consults, speaks, and writes. If you’re looking for unreasonable, you may want to talk with him.

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