

TRANSFORMING FEAR INTO ACTION

On May 29th, 2013, a press conference was held in Tokyo, Japan featuring a man who had earned admission into the Guinness World of Records. Surrounded by reporters, photographers, and other media personnel, this gentleman was there to discuss his extraordinary feats and the events leading up to his accomplishment being documented as a world record.

Yuichiro Miura, at the age of 70, had originally become the oldest man to summit Mount Everest. However, upon learning about this achievement, a 72-year-old was so inspired by Miura that he then became the oldest man to summit Mount Everest. Miura read about this in the paper and at the age of 75 once again became the oldest man to summit that great mountain.

If you can believe it, this continued once more, until Miura – at the age of 80 – had finally secured the achievement of being the oldest man to summit Mount Everest for the third time, which earned admission into the Guinness Book of World Records. What an incredible “competition” between these golden-year individuals!

WHAT'S LIMITING YOU?

When watching the press conference focused on Miura, it was not necessarily the statements he made, but the questions he posed in light of his actions that I found to be most inspiring. In essence he asked, “what would you do, what would you attempt if you knew you would not fail?”

It's a question I've seen in a number of motivational settings. However, posed by a man who scaled the highest mountain on earth at the oldest age, it carried greater impact. Here was a man who achieved what many would be afraid to do or even attempt.

And that's just it – it's our fear that prevents us and limits us from accomplishing greater heights in our lives. What would you attempt to do in your life if you knew you could not fail? Take the time to really consider what those goals would be. List them and then consider why you'd need the promise of not failing in order to even attempt them. What are those fears?

At the heart of my teaching and consulting, I focus on helping people overcome one of the greatest challenges each of us face in our personal and professional lives: the need to be understood. Compared to all of the incredible challenges awaiting us – like, summiting Mount Everest - why is this one need, the need to be understood, so daunting?

This need is built on communication, which is a fundamental aspect of life. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of communication can get derailed by fears, language choices, and just bad habits. One of Jerry Seinfeld's standup routines addressed this fear of communicating: “According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking...death is number two. At a funeral, the average person would rather be in the casket than giving the eulogy.”

So many of my clients and students are deathly afraid of communicating to groups of people large and small. We work through those fears and as a result, their potential for success is unlike it has ever been before. But, what is it that we are so afraid of? I've found that it ultimately comes down to three things:

- **making a mistake**
- **being judged**
- **failure**

These fears become our limits – getting in the way of what we can accomplish. We all have them – so how do some seem to overcome them? They transform fear into action. Ultimately, success is what happens after you've survived all your mistakes.

OVERCOMING FEAR, SUMMITTING OUR EVEREST, AND INSPIRING OTHERS AS WE DO

What if we were able to overcome our fear of communicating and interacting with others? What if we could accomplish success for ourselves and inspire others as effective leaders as we did so? Imagine the possibilities that could be realized if we and our team members felt it was possible to even attempt certain goals and aspirations?

The language of leading – which is focused on inspiring, persuading, and provoking action – may sound like it is built on verbal communication. When we hear the word “language” many of us think of how we verbally relate to someone. However, language is much more than words, it's action. The combination of those two factors – words and action - create something powerful.

As effective leaders we should be inspiring our teams to achieve more. We can do that by overcoming our own fears and accomplishing things for ourselves. Follow my blog to find out what tools are available to help you transform your fears into success and become a more effective leader.



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A 25-year veteran of Wall Street, he spent 14 years in sales and marketing at Bloomberg in a variety of leadership positions. He was Director of Business Development at BlackRock Solutions, an arm of the world's largest investment manager, and was a Managing Director at Citadel, a prestigious alternative investment manager.

He is also a mountaineer and has climbed some of the world's tallest peaks, including Mount Kilimanjaro, Mount Elbrus, the Matterhorn, as well as mountains in Alaska and the Andes.