

# The Chinese bamboo

Leonardo da Vinci painted the “Mona Lisa” when he was 50 years old. Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross when she was 59. George Bernard Shaw wrote his famous drama, *Saint Joan*, when he was 67. Cervantes completed *Don Quixote* when he was almost 70. Will Durant sold a series of television programs when he was in his 90’s. And who knows, maybe you’ll complete your greatest achievement when you’re 100!

Some people resemble desert grass in springtime; they flourish overnight. Mozart composed his first symphony when he was eight years old. But others—and perhaps you or someone you know belongs to this group—require many years of preparation before they tap their potential. These people resemble the moso—a Chinese bamboo plant.

When a farmer plants a moso, he can take care of it for an entire year—watering, weeding and fertilizing—and not see any signs of growth. He can continue pampering his moso for another year and *still* not see any growth. It can go on like this for up to FIVE YEARS, after which time the moso will finally burst through the soil and within six weeks become a towering 90-foot Chinese bamboo plant! That’s the height of a nine-story office building!

All those years when the farmer saw no growth above the ground, the moso was spreading its root system—miles of roots—**getting ready!** And that’s the way many people are. They need lots of time to get ready!

Perhaps you’ve been frustrated with yourself for not improving as quickly as you’d like to—



for not getting that promotion, or breaking 90 on the golf course. Perhaps you’ve been annoyed or frustrated with your spouse, or your children, an employee or friend, for not accomplishing something as fast you thought they should. Have patience! Spreading roots and clearing one’s thoughts of debilitating fears and doubts might take a while, but eventually there will be improvement. And when it occurs, it could be as sudden and dramatic as the growth of the Chinese bamboo!

**Here’s what you can do:** *Be expectant, but keep your expectations realistic—for yourself and others. Have faith. Know that every step you take will eventually have meaning, and will gradually move you towards your destiny. And when doubts creep in, remember the amazing Chinese bamboo plant!*



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## The Unlimited Unlimited Unlimited Unl Times

“Dedicated to helping you tap your unlimited potential.”

# The 15 mph sports car



## Remove the governor, tap your potential, and you'll end up in the winner's circle

If you feel you're not tapping your full potential, it could be you've allowed a mental speed-governor to restrict your thinking, much like the "governor" that restricted the sports car in the following story.

It wasn't just a sporty-looking car, it was the real thing: a high-performance beauty with a twin-overhead-cam engine. It was capable of speeds up to 180 miles per hour, and when Steve drove it off the dealer's lot, he knew the slightest pressure on the accelerator pedal would send him down the highway like a gunshot. He was thrilled to finally be behind the wheel of his expensive new toy.

He rounded the corner, drove slowly up the freeway entrance ramp, looked over his shoulder to make sure the traffic was light, and then stepped on it. But nothing happened. The speedometer indicated he was crawling at only 15 miles per hour. Steve pressed down on the accelerator with his full weight, but the car's speed—if you could call it that—didn't change. He barely managed to reach the next off-ramp without causing an accident.

"Something *must* be wrong," he said to himself as he drove at a painfully slow 15 miles per hour back to the dealer. Steve asked one of the mechanics to look under the hood, but after a brief inspection the fellow said, "Everything looks fine to me." So once again Steve drove off the lot—at 15 miles per hour.

It took him over two hours to drive the 30 miles to his home, and by then he was thoroughly disgusted. He immediately called the salesman. "I want my money back! This car is a slug!"

Steve was in no mood to listen to an explanation, so the salesman sent someone out to pick up the car and refund his money.

A few weeks later Steve was at an auto race, and he couldn't believe his eyes! He saw his car zooming at 162 miles per hour! As soon as the race was over, he leaped from his seat and jogged down to meet the driver.

"What did you do?" Steve asked, nearly out of breath. "How did you get that thing to go more than 15 miles per hour?"

The driver smiled and said, "All I did was remove the speed governor—a block of wood under the accelerator pedal. The manufacturer recently began installing governors on these cars to ensure that whoever buys one will be getting an absolutely *new* car."

Feeling very foolish, Steve walked away. Had he only taken the time to listen, he could have removed the governor himself.

**Here's what you can do:** Most people—yourself included—place governors on their thinking, just as automobile manufacturers sometimes do with their cars. Once you realize that, mental governors are easy to detect, because they're associated with statements like, "I've always been that way," "There's nothing I can do," "That's just the way I am," or "I inherited that trait from my father." Accept the fact that you don't have engine trouble! Have faith that everything "under the hood" works fine. Then, begin removing your governor gradually. There's no need to "floor it" or to expect unrealistic results immediately. Just accelerate slowly and advance steadily, by setting successively higher goals.

# Attitude of gratitude

## **Joel, why are thank you notes so important?**

Thank you notes are one of the “little things” that so few people take the time to do! Their importance was made clear to me years ago when I received a letter from someone who had attended one of my seminars for Dean Witter, Ross Hawkins. Ross heard me talk about the importance of writing thank you notes, and he decided to put the idea into action. He began writing notes to clients, friends and associates. He was amazed to find how much they were appreciated, though they took him only minutes to prepare. One of the notes he wrote was to his own father, telling him how much he appreciated him. It was only a few months later that his father suddenly passed away. Ross was unable to be at his side at the final moment, but he found comfort in knowing that his dad had indeed received his thank you note, before it was too late!

Soon after I received that letter from Ross, I began writing many more thank you notes myself. Among others, I wrote to my own mother. In fact, I made it a point to write her a note on a postcard every time I travelled out of town, which in my work is about once every week. Just a quick “Hi Mom, I’m in Atlanta. Thinking of you. Love, Joel.” Often I’d be back home and already have visited my mom before the postcard got there, but it didn’t matter. I knew she enjoyed receiving them.

When my mom passed away unexpectedly years later, Judy and I went over to her home to pack up her things. We were surprised to find an old shoebox in one of the kitchen cabinets. And inside was, you guessed it, all the postcards I had been sending her all those many years. She had saved every one!

It’s such a little thing, but remember, it’s the little things that really make the difference!

Once again I was reminded of the importance of this “little thing” when I received the following letter:

“Dear Joel, My name is Sam Ball. I attended your seminar on Coyote Power. My one best AH-HA was to write thank you notes to loved ones, so the next day after the seminar I went into the gift shop at the hotel, purchased some stationery and stamps, and sat down and wrote a letter to my grandmother. She was 89 years old at that time. I then took your idea



and made it a habit to write to her anytime I was out of town on business. She thoroughly enjoyed my letters.

“As time went on she had to move into a nursing home. I then started to write to her every Monday morning, until she died at the age of 91. I just wanted to thank you, because I not only became much closer to my grandmother, but I made her last few years on earth much happier ones. I also never felt better about myself! Joel, I will continue to write letters to friends and loved ones, thanks to you and your words of encouragement. I also use this principle in my business relationships and it has helped those relationships as well. Sincerely, Sam Ball.”

**Here’s what you can do:** *How many thank you notes are you writing? Are you remembering to express your appreciation to those you care the most about? How about to a family member, a friend, an associate, the person who hired you or trained you, or helped you through a difficult time in your career? When you send someone a handwritten thank you note it shows them in a tangible way that you really cared. And they can save it and read it again and again! Have an attitude of gratitude. Look for the good, and you’ll find it. Remember, what you emphasize, multiplies. And don’t wait till it’s too late—do it now!*

# Quality in a brown paper bag

**People flocked to buy the best sandwiches in town, despite unfavorable conditions**

On Camelback Road in Phoenix, Arizona, there was a shop with only twelve feet of frontage space. Although it was a restaurant, it didn't have many tables for people to sit and eat at. The few tables it did have were outside, and in Arizona "outside" means *hot*. Summer temperatures can sometimes soar to 114 degrees. With so few tables, most customers were obliged to sit on the grass adjacent to the restaurant. And the menu they chose from was limited to six or seven types of sandwiches, each served in a brown paper bag! And as if that weren't enough to scare away everyone but an occasional Bedouin accustomed to eating outside under the scorching desert sun, the prices were high for a sandwich—perhaps the highest in town.

But those sandwiches were the *best* in town, and people *flocked* to that tiny restaurant called "Duck and Decanter." They braved the heat, waited in long lines, paid over six dollars each, and then plunked themselves down on the grass—despite their business attire—and ate sandwiches served hard-hat style.

Duck and Decanter was not always so successful. When Earl and Dorothy Mettler bought the shop, the previous owner was selling specialty kitchen utensils and only about 25 sandwiches a day at lunchtime. And within a month, the Mettlers' sandwich sales had dropped to ten a day. The Mettlers saw the need to do some creative problem solving and to look for the opportunity in what appeared to be a bad situation! Soon they came up with a plan: Make the best sandwiches and put them in a specially designed brown paper bag called "The Nooner." Then establish an advertising budget, but instead of advertising, use the money to



give a full refund to any customer who was dissatisfied in any way. By improving the quality of the sandwiches, and by guaranteeing a full refund to any dissatisfied customer, their business grew... and grew... and grew.

Soon Duck and Decanter had three locations, 25 employees and was selling about 700 sandwiches every day at noon, which is amazing for a small family-owned shop. In fact, one day they sold over 1,400 sandwiches! And the reason for their success was simple: quality never fails, and the Mettlers served the best sandwiches people had ever tasted.

**Here's what you can do:** *Strive for quality in your work. Make your product or service the best of its kind. Refuse to cut corners or skimp in any way. Whatever this costs you in time, effort or even money, will come back to you ten times over.*

*Most people say "cut back," "shave it a little," and "don't overdo it." But the winner knows that giving MORE than is required is the fastest way to reach the top. As Walt Disney said: You will have unlimited abundance when you do what you do so well, that when other people see what it is you do, they'll want to see you do it again, and will bring others with them to show them what you do. Quality never fails!*



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