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Personal Breakthrough

Applying proven managerial techniques to your personal life

Part I

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The Great Discovery – the 4th Generation of Six Sigma – *is a process that creates breakthrough in everything that you do.* I first became aware of the term *breakthrough* in the book “Managerial Breakthrough by Joseph M. Juran (1964)¹. It was the first book to describe a step-by-step sequence for breakthrough improvement.² Juran is known as the “Father of Quality” and his techniques are well respected. Juran along with W. Edwards Deming are among the most quoted leaders of quality management. Many of their ideas were based upon the landmark work of Walter A. Shewhart in the 1920’s and 1930’s. The point is, that what I’m about to share with you is not new, but I hope to give you some new insights on how we can learn from the principles established by these great leaders.

I have had the privilege to be mentored by and work with Dr. Mikel Harry – the co-creator of Six Sigma over the last few years. Six Sigma was the idea of Bill Smith, an engineer at Motorola. Motorola was struggling with quality and losing business to the Japanese in the 1980’s, as a result of the Japanese focus on quality and poor quality at Motorola. The Japanese had already taken a significant chunk of the automotive industry in the 1970’s and were now focused on the electronics industry. Mikel and Bill developed and refined the idea of Six Sigma. Unfortunately, Bill had an untimely death. Mikel was called on by Bob Galvin, CEO of Motorola, to lead the Six Sigma effort. Mikel is considered by many as the world’s foremost expert on Six Sigma, while others don’t even know his name. Why is this? With the growth of Six Sigma, there also was a growth of Six Sigma consultants. Many of the

books written on Six Sigma were written by consultants who were competing with Mikel Harry. It was not to the benefit of these competing consultants to recognize Mikel Harry as the co-creator of Six Sigma, so their histories are ambiguous. Typically, these authors give credit to Bob Galvin. When Mikel Harry won the Engineering Excellence Award at Arizona State University in 2002, Bob Galvin spoke at his presentation. Would Bob have done this if Mikel was exaggerating his role in Six Sigma? I think not. Many of these competing consultants went on to train many Black Belts and did not relay an accurate history. Because of this along with the ambiguity in many references, many were not made aware of Mikel Harry’s role with regard to Six Sigma.

Juran noted, “*The author pleads innocent to the invention (referring to breakthrough sequence). In observing other managers in many situations, he has found that each of them had invented or reinvented these sequences, and that the inventions were all alike. All the author has done is to restate these sequences in a more generalized order form*” Similarly, many have tried to classify Six Sigma, as simply an “old set of tools” with a new name. Mikel Harry notes on his website (<http://www.mikeljharry.com>) under “Six Sigma Story – The Days at Motorola³” that many of the Six Sigma concepts were based upon the works of Shewhart, Deming, Juran, Shannin, and others. Like Juran with his “breakthrough strategy,” Mikel Harry was simply reorganizing the works of the “greats” in a better form so that it could be more

effective. This is not to diminish the many concepts developed by Mikel Harry as Six Sigma evolved; but, is beyond the scope of this article.

Classic Six Sigma includes a high level of statistics and only implementable by 5% of the people. Mikel Harry was challenged by a senior executive to develop a cognitive roadmap that would allow the other 95% of the people to implement the Six Sigma concept. After many years of work, Mikel Harry released this work in the form of “The Great Discovery – The 4th Generation of Six Sigma.”

It is through my opportunity to work with Mikel Harry and a review of Juran’s Managerial Breakthrough that I have become so excited about the opportunity to use “The Great Discovery’s” proven path of success to help others share the techniques that I have enjoyed from Six Sigma, by showing them how it can be used in their personal lives, home lives, and work lives.

The recognition of the difference between breakthrough and control was foundation of Juran’s Managerial Breakthrough. Breakthrough is also an important tenet in Six Sigma and “The Great Discovery” – the cognitive roadmap for Six Sigma. Juran says, “*Breakthrough means change, a dynamic, decisive movement to new higher levels of performance.*” When applying this to your personal life you might want to replace the word “performance” with happiness, satisfaction, success, higher spiritual awareness, or other words that you desire to accomplish.

Notice the word *change* in Juran’s definition for breakthrough? There have been many books written on change management and quite frankly nobody really likes change. Most of us, even when we know we need to change, don’t want to change as this means breaking status quo. Even if status quo is something in which we are struggling, at least we think we understand it; while change is sure to bring something unknown. We tend to fear the unknown and therefore, are prone to not take action. Juran notes, “*In a truly static society, breakthrough is taboo.*” “*This predictability (in staying with the status quo) was, in due course paid for by a later generation. The price paid was the extinction of the static society through conquest or other takeover by some form of society on the move.*” Fear of change is natural and may even be something deep in the human makeup. If we are to remove the dissatisfaction in our lives, we must be willing to change and overcome the fear of the unknown. The Great Discovery provides a proven path for allowing you to visualize change and shines light on the path removing the fear of change.

My favorite poem is “The Calf Path” written by Sam Walter Foss who died in 1911.

One day, through the primeval wood,
A calf walked home, as good calves should;

But made a trail all bent askew,
A crooked trail as all calves do.

Since then three hundred years have fled,
And, I infer, the calf is dead.

But still he left behind his trail,
And thereby hangs my moral tale.

The trail was taken up next day,
By a lone dog that passed that way.

And then a wise bell-wether sheep,
Pursued the trail o'er vale and steep;

And drew the flock behind him too,
As good bell-wethers always do.

And from that day, o'er hill and glade.
Through those old woods a path was made.

And many men wound in and out,
And dodged, and turned, and bent about;

And uttered words of righteous wrath,
Because 'twas such a crooked path.

But still they followed - do not laugh -
The first migrations of that calf.

And through this winding wood-way stalked,
Because he wobbled when he walked.

This forest path became a lane,
that bent, and turned, and turned again.

This crooked lane became a road,
Where many a poor horse with his load,

Toiled on beneath the burning sun,
And traveled some three miles in one.

And thus a century and a half,
They trod the footsteps of that calf.

The years passed on in swiftness fleet,
The road became a village street;

And this, before men were aware,
A city's crowded thoroughfare;

And soon the central street was this,
Of a renowned metropolis;

And men two centuries and a half,
Trod in the footsteps of that calf.

Each day a hundred thousand rout,
Followed the zigzag calf about;

And o'er his crooked journey went,
The traffic of a continent.

A Hundred thousand men were led,
By one calf near three centuries dead.

They followed still his crooked way,
And lost one hundred years a day;

For thus such reverence is lent,
To well established precedent.

A moral lesson this might teach,
Were I ordained and called to preach;

For men are prone to go it blind,
Along the calf-paths of the mind;

And work away from sun to sun,
To do what other men have done.

They follow in the beaten track,
And out and in, and forth and back,

And still their devious course pursue,
To keep the path that others do.

They keep the path a sacred grove,
Along which all their lives they move.

But how the wise old wood gods laugh,
Who saw the first primeval calf!

Ah! many things this tale might teach -
But I am not ordained to preach.

“The Calf Path” tells us that most people get in a rut. They simply do what they have always done or follow the path of someone else because it is easier to follow the “sacred groove” than to forge a new path – it is easier to stay with the status quo than it is to change. Following the calf wasted time and energy. We might consider that not changing the status quo in our personal lives is literally wasting our lives.

Juran notes, “We can become so preoccupied with **meeting** targets that we fail to **challenge** the target itself.” Contrast this with the word *dynamic* in Juran’s definition of breakthrough. In Six Sigma we often refer to *breakthrough change* as compared to gradual change or tweaking the system. There is a saying,

“If you are not growing, you are dying.” In the business world, this means that you must grow or you will be overcome by your competitors and your business will suffer and eventually fail. Most companies in fact have plans for change and set targets for such change; however, these changes are typically modest and are likely to follow the rut of The Calf Path. It is easy to take baby steps or to follow steps in which we are familiar; but, giant steps or dynamic change invoke the fear of change and as in early society are taboo, or considered too risky. The Six Sigma way of thinking as taught in The Great Discovery is not about simply changing, but about breakthrough change. Six Sigma does not advocate excessive risk; but, rather relies on identifying the risks and developing a clear path leading to dynamic change.

Juran notes that “*The variety of breakthrough is as broad as human imagination.*” One of the tenets of The Great Discovery is to “Dream Big” – change the way you are doing business – change the way you are living your life. The Great Discovery teaches you how to think beyond your norms and remove the bounds from your dreams and shed light on the path that will lead you to accomplishing that dream. The only limitation is the individual fear of change. The Great Discovery will help you visualize the change avoiding walking blindly along the dark path of fear.

Are you stagnate or dealing with modest change in life or work? Are you feeling dissatisfaction or frustration? Throw out your fear of change. Remove the bounds from your dream. Dream Big or at least open your mind to dreaming big. That is the first step to breakthrough change.

¹ Juran, J.M, “Managerial Breakthrough,” McGraw Hill Book Company, New York, 1964

² http://www.juran.com/about_juran_institute_our_founder.html

³ <http://www.mikeljharry.com/story.php?cid=8>