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Breakthrough versus Control

Applying proven managerial techniques to your personal life

Part II

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In Part I, we learned from Juran that *“Breakthrough means change, a dynamic, decisive movement to new higher levels of performance.”* In order to have breakthrough, we must have dynamic change, as opposed to a little tweak here and there. We also learned that breakthrough is only limited by the human imagination and overcoming our fear of change. The Great Discovery asks you to dream big and then follow a proven path built on your core values so you will have the passion to achieve your dreams. If you have forgotten, what you read in “Part 1 - Personal Breakthrough,” you might want to take a few minutes and read it again before continuing.

Wikipedia says, “Control is the ability to purposefully direct, or suppress, change.” In quality control, we are not trying to improve or change the process, just the contrary, we are trying to make sure that each product or service is produced within some guideline. We are trying to prevent the process from changing so that that every product is produced as close to the same level as possible or every person receives the same service as the next one.

Juran points out that *“All managerial activity is directed at either Breakthrough or Control.”* I’m sure most of us, even those of us that are managers, have reflected on management from this perspective although Juran’s observation occurred in 1964. But think about it. Managers are either trying to make things better (Breakthrough) or maintain the status quo of existing policies or procedures (Control). Ok, there are some other tasks like human relations, etc.; but, the essential elements of management are focused on Breakthrough and Control.

Juran goes on to make an important point, *“There is nothing inconsistent about a manager conducting both of these activities simultaneously. Some things should by all means be prevented from changing. Others should by all means be changed.”* The same is true about your life. There are likely some parts of your life in which you are perfectly happy and others in which you are mostly satisfied. It is likely that the parts in which you have satisfaction are aligned with your core values. There is no need to change something which provides satisfaction. The Great Discovery focuses on the areas of your life that are not aligned with your values and your breakthrough dream, and helps to get them aligned so you will have the passion to complete your dream. While you are pursuing breakthrough in one area of your life it is important that you maintain control in the other parts of your life. Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton describe this important management concept in “Using the Balanced Scorecard as a Strategic Management System.” Kaplan and Norton point out that when we come up with an idea to improve one part of the system (from a personal perspective, your life is the system), it is important to make sure it does not have a negative effect on other parts of the system.

Along the path to success there are “*alternating plateaus and gains in performance. The plateaus are the result of Control – prevention of change. The gains are the result of Breakthrough – creation of change.*” You shouldn’t just push and push and push; instead stop and take a breath to see if what you have done is working the way you anticipated. During these points of pause, you are on a plateau of Control – trying to prevent change during the evaluation period. Once you are confident about your path, push for another breakthrough. Often when there is a pause for evaluation, a wrong turn is discovered, and a need to reassess your values, restate your dream, and/or changes your road map is required. As you go through The Great Discovery process, you will gain knowledge and should make the necessary adjustments to reflect that gain in knowledge. Stopping to pause can actually get you to your final goal faster than just pushing forward. I’m a long distance motorcycle rider – riding 1000 to 1500 miles in a day. Ron Ayres wrote in his book "Against the Wind" that sometimes you need to “stop to go further” meaning that if you stop and evaluate yourself and your motorcycle, you can often go further than just continuing to push. The same is true about accomplishing your life or work dreams. It is important that you periodically settle into a Control plateau and allow the dust to clear and make sure that you are still on track before pushing on to the next level of Breakthrough.

If things get out of Control, troubles emerge which can cause you immediate pain, Juran calls these troubles, “*sporadic problems.*” You might say, “Why do I keep making the same mistake over and over?” In management, people actually make a living being the hero by throwing water on problems that occur over and over again. I call these people “Bonfire Bonanza Men or Women” These people seem to never get tired of being the hero, when in fact their failure to eliminate the problem, so it never occurs again, is costing the company money in the long term. You need to learn to identify the issues that are causing you to go out of control and eliminate them, instead of simply putting a Band-Aid on them. In Six Sigma talk, we call this focusing on the x’s, or y is a function of x. The y is the problem. It doesn’t do any good to dwell on the y; instead, we need to learn to identify the x’s – the root causes that are causing the problem. For example, I may be overweight because I eat too much or eat the wrong things. Focuses on being overweight is not going to eliminate my problem. I need to identify what causes me to overeat or eat the wrong foods and work to correct those causes.

So what can’t you just get your life in Control and stay there? You can. In Six Sigma we use a method called DMAIC (Duh, may, ic) The C stands for Control. Once there is Breakthrough it is important to maintain things so they do not deteriorate. If you are perfectly happy with your personal and work life and rarely have to deal with sporadic problems, there is nothing wrong with just maintaining control. If you are perfectly happy, just keep doing what you are doing. However, if you see a need for improvement you have to use a different kind of thinking and should consider the proven path of Six Sigma as outlined in The Great Discovery.

Why do you need to learn a new way of thinking? Let’s try to learn some more from Juran, “*Managers generally lack awareness that the attitudes, the organization, and the methods used to achieve Breakthrough differ remarkably from those used to achieve Control. The differences are so great that the decision of whether, at any one time, to embark on Breakthrough or continue Control is of cardinal importance. This decision hinges on managerial attitude.*”

<i>Sequence of events</i>	<i>For Control</i>	<i>For Breakthrough</i>
<i>Managerial attitude is one of believing that:</i>	<i>The present level of performance is good enough, or if not, it cannot be improved, i.e. it is a fate not a problem.</i>	<i>The present level of performance is not good enough, and something can be done about it, i.e., it is a problem, not fate.</i>
<i>Managerial objective becomes one of:</i>	<i>Perpetuating performance at the present level through control procedures.</i>	<i>Achieving a better performance through the Breakthrough procedure.</i>
<i>Managerial plan is to:</i>	<i>Identify and eliminate sporadic departures from usual performance.</i>	<i>Identify and eliminate chronic obstacles to better performance</i>

If you are satisfied with where you are in life; do not have the feeling that your current state is a compromise; have not set aside your dreams as un-accomplishable; and are not having to deal with the same problems over and over, then you should stay in a state of Control – you should be happy. However, if you have feelings of dissatisfaction; want more from life; want to quit swatting at the same problems over and over, then you should pursue Breakthrough. *“The military words for Breakthrough are invasion, attack, offense, charge. The corresponding words for Control are defense, dig in, stand fast, hole- the-line.”* With Breakthrough, you need to be proactive in your life. With Control you just need to maintain the status quo.

Juran notes, *“There is an extensive body of management literature which holds that the process of managing is conducted through a sequence of activities somewhat as follows:*

- 1. Policy making*
- 2. Setting objectives*
- 3. Planning to meet objectives*
- 4. Organizing to execute the objectives*
- 5. Selection and training for manning the organization*
- 6. Motivation of the people*
- 7. Appraising results”*

In our personal lives this might be:

- 1. Developing a philosophy about life*
- 2. Setting objectives*
- 3. Planning to meet objectives*
- 4. Organizing to execute the objectives*
- 5. Developing the skills or resources necessary to achieve the objectives*
- 6. Maintaining a passion or strong spirit in the pursuit of the objectives*
- 7. Appraising results”*

Juran notes *“This sequence of activities is correct as far as it goes. However, it makes no distinction between two very different concepts: (1) objectives for Breakthrough and (2) objectives for Control. There is one universal sequence of steps which fits Breakthrough, and another universal sequence of steps which fits all Control. It is common experience that when “Breakthrough thinking” and “Control*

thinking” are confounded, the pace of Breakthrough suffers seriously.” It is important that we separate out the part of the system (or our lives) that needs to be controlled from the parts that need to be improved. Control requires one kind of thinking and Breakthrough another. The two can be used concurrently but should not be confounded.

The Great Discovery is designed to take you through a step by step process. **It does not tell you what to do, but rather shows you how to do it.** It encourages you to dream big – pursue breakthrough in your life – and shows you how to align your dream with your core values and build a path to accomplishing your dreams. When your dreams and core values are aligned and you can visualize the path to accomplishing your dreams, you will have a strong spirit to create Breakthrough and will be on the way to accomplishing your dream.

Is your life or workplace in Control without any areas that need improvement? Congratulations, you should feel quite satisfied. However, if you have areas in which you would like to achieve Breakthrough, consider The Great Discovery, a proven method that shows ordinary people how to achieve extraordinary results.