



Virtual Gestation

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

It is a story as old as mankind itself. You plant a seed in a moment of passion, and initially nothing visible occurs. Hidden microscopic changes have been made that will play out over the subsequent nine months. Slowly, over time, you are able to detect changes, growth, anticipation. At first the signs are slight and hard to see, but later on, the changes are obvious to everyone. The gestation period takes roughly 280 days, and as sure as the sun rises in the east, a major event occurs. All of this is no surprise. We know what to expect, and nature works like clockwork.

Well, strangely enough, it happened to me, but I really was not expecting it, since I am male. There was a degree of divine intervention, as I will explain. Lest you think I am some kind of freak of nature, let me explain that the "explosion" I experienced after 284 days from planting the seed was virtual. It was a result of an article I published on May 5, 2012.

The article was entitled "Situational Emotional Intelligence." The gist of the article was that each one of us experiences Emotional Intelligence in unique ways. We are all different, and it stands to reason that no two people will react the same way to external stimuli. Further, I tried to make a case that each of us will react differently to situations depending on the exact context of each situation. Emotional Intelligence is "situational." The concept was interesting, but not very profound.

One of the illustrative examples I used in the blog was Rev. Edward Salmon, a corporate contract negotiator who became a Jesuit priest and the head of a Catholic high school in my city. His response to everyday emotional situations as he worked in the two different contexts was dramatically different, as you might imagine.

At the time, I received several favorable comments on the article, which is my typical pattern. I monitor the traffic to my blog daily in an attempt to find out how to improve my offerings for the future. It is very interesting, because sometimes I will think an article is extremely insightful, and the returns will be business as usual. Other times I will put out what I consider a more routine article, and the analytics will light up as a result. I have noticed that two conditions give rise to the most traffic. Either I have made some kind of a contribution that is really helping

people, or I have written something that has annoyed a lot of folks. You learn to take the good with the bad. The blogosphere not a place for people who cannot take criticism.

The article on "Situational Emotional Intelligence" had produced the typical response, and I was happy with the numbers. Over the next few months, my traffic began to grow from the normal average of about 80 hits per day to more like an average of 120 hits per day. One might think of this as me just getting heavier with the years (which I admit is actually happening), but my analogy with the gestation period is not complete without a significant amount of belt loosening.

As I am writing this article, it is February 13, 2013. Today is exactly 284 days from the planting of that seed last May. When I opened up my blog at 6 a.m. to check on the stats from yesterday, I expected to see roughly 20 hits, which would be a normal return for that hour of the day. Instead, I saw over 200 hits had been recorded overnight. This shows up as a viral explosion on my returns chart: kind of like a birth.

Immediately I went back through the analytics to find out why my current article was driving so much traffic. I discovered that the bulk of the hits were not from my current article at all, but were for that article I published 284 days ago - exactly the amount of time for the human gestation period. What was going on? Then it hit me.

There was a world event that happened on Feb. 11th that would seem to have little connection to my article on Emotional Intelligence. On that day, Pope Benedict announced he will step down for health reasons. I was still trying to fit the puzzle together in my mind when I went back and looked at my keywords. One of them was "Catholic." Ahh, that single keyword was the trigger for a large spike in my blog traffic today. It may have been automated search bots rather than individuals, but the spike in traffic is still notable.

I wanted to share this story because it illustrates that you never know what future events will trigger a wave of responses based on the entire field of your content. Everything we say or do has some potential to sway future events in ways we can never predict. I think that makes life really interesting.

I will leave it up to you as to whether the gestation period of 284 days was simple random chance or if there was some guidance from a stronger hand. The only disappointing thing is that apparently I have not lost much weight as a result of the birth.

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