

We Really Have a Choice

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

Just for a moment, take a guess at what percentage of the world's population woke up today with a mindset of peace and happiness. If you think carefully about all of the people who don't know if they will have anything to eat today, or those who are bent on destroying other people, whether it be in an organized group or with some kind of substance abuse, your estimate might be pretty low. If you include those who haven't a clue how they are going to survive financially or physically, and if you include those who must steal in some way from others in order to survive today, you might lower your estimate further.

As I pondered the question at length, my own estimate is that less than 20% of the people currently living on earth are actually living wholesome, constructive, and full lives. The rest are trying to exist in a perpetual struggle as they cross off each day and draw one day closer to their grave. Even in the richest and most productive country on the planet, a large portion of the population focuses on survival at the most basic level with little hope or optimism for a rewarding life, or they buy guns for the purpose of killing others or for protecting themselves (which is another way of saying killing others). I think it is really sad.

Now let's flip to the other extreme. Every time a new human infant pops out of the womb, think about the potential that has been created in that little package. Every soul has the potential to become someone of significant positive value to the world. What are the odds that a particular infant will grow up to be a Mother Theresa or a Nelson Mandela? I think you will agree the odds are infinitesimal, so nearly all of the wonderful potential that is born with each new baby is somehow blunted to the point that the person has no real chance of being a productive human being.

Now let me bend your mind a bit more. If you are one of the fortunate few people that live a comfortable and productive life, how can you use your extreme good fortune to make a difference? You and I have a choice to just enjoy our luck as we take one more step toward our last day, or we can do our best to actually make a difference in the world. Oh I know, it seems like lunacy to actually try to make a difference because the problems are so immense, so we shrug our shoulders and go for hedonism. It reminds

me of a line from an old song by Buffy Sainte-Marie, “Ah what can I do say a powerless few, with a lump in your throat and a tear in your eye, can’t you see that their poverty’s profiting you?”

There is no solution to this musing and no magic wand to wave that will have a noticeable impact. I just wanted to take a moment at the start of 2016 to remind myself that the choice of what I am doing with my gifts is really mine. I need to step up to the realization that if I decide to make a small change in the world, that is a good thing; and if enough of us do some good things, the aggregate impact may be large enough to notice. So, I rededicate myself to helping to grow leaders in every way I know how to do it. That is the gift I bring to the world and my reason for living.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: *Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change*, *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, and *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations. For more information, or to bring Bob in to speak at your next event, **contact him at** www.Leadergrow.com, bwhipple@leadergrow.com or 585.392.7763

