



David Freund  
Chief Leadership Officer

## Why Not?

Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw has been credited with the quote “Some men see things as they are and ask why. Others dream of things that have never been and ask why not.” Many that know me would never think that I would be referencing Shaw. Certainly, I do not ascribe to many of his views in life, but this quote is spot on. My Dad would often share a similar but more humorous quote with me: “There are three types of people in this world. People who make things happen, people who watch things happen, and people who wonder what happened.”

All of us have the potential to be any one of these people on any given day of our life. The choice is totally up to us whether we sit and wonder what happened, complain about why something happened, or make a proactive choice to get off our backsides and make things happen.

In order to stay in the last group, we should develop a predisposition to action. The term predisposition can be frightening because often it is used to describe a person who is not open to new ideas. However, the term can also be very positive if it means we have a predisposition to action on a daily basis. Have we established daily habits that move us into action in the areas that we want to grow? A great application of this would be cultivating curiosity on a daily basis.

Perhaps the first step in cultivating curiosity is getting over ourselves. We have to admit that we do not have all the answers and that everyone we meet can teach us something. That is not a typo. I really mean everyone can teach us something. The sooner we realize this, the better off we will be. Each person we meet throughout our day is a potential learning opportunity because each

person has lived a life full of unique experiences. Sharper Image founder Richard Thalheimer said “It is better to look uniformed than to be uninformed. Curb your ego and keep asking questions.”

Plan to spend time with curious people. This can be a very infectious process because curious people are always asking questions and sharing what they have learned. Simply by being around them, you will be learning and growing. Schedule lunch meetings with people you admire and look up to. Ask them questions like what they are reading, what their greatest struggles have been, or what they are learning at this stage in their career. One way to determine if you are on the right track is to ask yourself if you are asking more questions than you are answering.

Are you looking for THE right answer or multiple right answers? Great leaders who are secure in their roles frequently look for multiple right answers. They are open to creative thinking with multiple solutions which allow for quicker buy-in and greater collaboration. This practice also models for their teams that it is okay to ask questions like “What am I missing?” or “What other solutions might work?” When a leader is secure enough to subordinate his ideas to the better ideas from his team, real innovation can occur.

Lastly, make a daily habit of recording your thoughts and learnings. A great habit to cultivate is to ask yourself four simple questions each day: What went well? What didn't go well? What did I learn? and What will I change?

If you apply these simple tools, you will be like one of those who dream of things and ask, “Why Not?” I have come to realize that it is not that people cannot, it is that they will not.

How about you? Will you commit to this challenge and grow? Let me know what you decide.