

LEADERSHIP

If You Meet Buddha On The Road, Kill Him!

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lives or both. However, if you were fortunate enough to meet Buddha, he would be loath to give you the answers you were looking for. He would, instead, encourage you to find the answers within yourself.

- If you met Buddha on the road and tried to follow him, you may well end up going down the wrong path at the wrong pace. We all have our own journeys to make in life; only we can decide which direction to move in and at what pace we want to move. Some of us are very clear about where we want to go and how quickly we want to get there. Others amongst us are less sure and will move more slowly.

Having a guide, mentor or coach is a great idea, but they should be encouraging you to find your own answers, not providing answers for you. Have you ever tried to ask a colleague or friend for advice and they say something like "Right, this is what you need to do!" As well-meaning as their advice may be, it might not be the right advice for you. Furthermore, they have just denied you an opportunity to think things through for yourself and to find answers that work for you, not them!

Often, in my one-to-one coaching sessions, I am presented with the following scenario upon meeting a coachee for the first time:

Does that sound sacrilegious? Possibly. However, it is also the title of a best selling book by author Sheldon Kopp.¹ Published in 1974, Kopp's book went on to top the book selling charts in many categories including business, self-development, leadership, management and spirituality.

The path to enlightenment

So what does that title mean? For me, there are two 'take away' messages.

- Many people go looking for a guide, mentor or 'Buddha' to provide them with answers in life. This could be our personal lives, our professional



Me: "How can I help you?"

Coachee: "I don't know"

Me: "What do you want?"

Coachee: "I don't want to be stressed/frustrated/angry/demotivated, etc."

Herein lies the starting point to 'enlightenment', as Buddha would say! Don't focus on what you don't want. Focus on what you do want. Our subconscious mind struggles to process a negative thought and so turns it into a positive thought. So when you say, "I don't want to be frustrated" your subconscious mind hears "I want to be frustrated" – and guess where that takes you!

Set positive goals

Start by stating your goals positively and put a date against them. For example:

"In the next 12 months I will gain experience in X so that I can gain promotion to Y"

Or:

"In the next 6 months, I will get better at time management in order to have a better work life balance"

Once we have positively stated goals, we can start to work out how we are going to achieve them. In simple terms, once we know where we are going, we can work out how to get there.

Trying to work toward negatively

stated goals is an exercise in futility. It's a bit like me, sitting in my office in Liverpool and saying "I don't want to go to London today". There are literally dozens of ways I could not go to London!

Sense where you want to go

When considering our goals, it is also important to engage all of our senses in creating a compelling vision of that goal. Our five basic senses can be very powerful tools in helping propel us toward our goals.

- **Visual:** What images do you see upon achieving your goal? Do you see yourself looking happy? Do you see a certificate or accomplishment or competence? Do you see other people looking at you with pride?
- **Auditory:** What can you hear when you accomplish your goal. Do you hear your own voice saying "Well done"? Do you hear other people congratulating you? Do you hear your boss offering you that promotion?
- **Kinesthetic:** How do you feel when you accomplish your goal? Is there sense of pride, accomplishment or relief? Can you feel other people physically patting you on the back?
- **Taste and Smell:** What does the sweet smell and taste of success actually

smell and taste like to you? Are you celebrating with champagne? How does that taste? Are you rewarding yourself with a meal in your favourite restaurant? What does that taste and smell like? Have people sent you flowers? How do they smell?

Create a compelling image of achieving your goal, engaging all of your senses (or as many as possible) and keep revisiting that image with all of its associated sounds, feelings, tastes and smells.

Do you really need to meet Buddha?

You may never be lucky enough to meet Buddha, but you don't need to. You may already be lucky enough to be working with a coach/mentor/guru and they should be guiding you to make the decisions that are right for you. If they're not, then maybe you should be looking inwards for guidance, rather than outwards.

Start by creating a positive statement of what you do want and when you want it by. Then engage all of your senses in creating a completely compelling image of success and go for it!

REFERENCES

1. Sheldon Kopp. If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him! The pilgrimage of psychotherapy patients. 1974.