
May 2003

A free, monthly electronic newsletter brought to you by:

Debra Exner, CPCC

Business & Personal Coach

Exner & Associates

Examine, Explore and Excel!

www.ExnerAssociates.com

IN THIS ISSUE:

- * Wake Up Calls
- * Name the Newsletter Contest
- * Tip of the Month
- * Coming Events
- * Spread the Word

WAKE UP CALLS

Have you ever had an experience that changed your life in some way? Many of us think of these as wake up calls. My wake up call came a little over five years ago when my mother was diagnosed with multiple myeloma.

Multiple myeloma (MM) is a currently incurable cancer of the bone marrow. At the time Mom was diagnosed, the median life expectancy was 2.5-3 years — which, I learned, meant that half of those diagnosed would die sooner and half would die later — sometimes 7, 9 or 12 years later. I still hang on to each “longest I know about” example, happily supplanting it with the next, still longer example. The longest I know about is 21 years. A lot has happened in the five years since Mom’s diagnosis. There has been an amazing growth of additional treatment options and there are many more currently being researched. Statistics change and life expectancies get longer. Hope gets stronger.

My Mom and I set out to enjoy each other’s company and have some fun. Trips with my adult son Chris, to Hawaii, Spain, and a cruise to Alaska had special meaning in the new way we measured time. Mom also traveled with friends on a barge trip in France, a trip to New Zealand, and had annual reunions with college roommates in Rhode Island. We served on the Delaware Chamber Music Festival board, ate countless meals together after doctor and test appointments, and continue to put together dozens of jigsaw puzzles and share many mystery novels. Happily, Mom is still doing very well and we’re about to plan another trip.

More than the diagnosis itself and the personal threat to Mom — as striking as that was — it was my immersion into the community of MM patients and caregivers that had the most impact on my life. I have met so many caring, knowledgeable and giving people. I’ve learned that how you live your life matters more than how long it is. Treya Killam Weber, a woman with breast cancer, summed it up in the book *Grace and Grit*, “Because I can no longer ignore death, I pay more attention to life.”

Mom's diagnosis also caused me to look at my life and to evaluate whether I was spending enough of my time on the things that were really important to me. I hired a coach to help me find ways to slow down the pace a bit, be more selective in my activities and find work where I can make a unique contribution. Coaching fascinated me and I was amazed at the difference it made in my life. I decided to take some time off and consider my options. My changes included getting trained and certified as a coach, finding wonderful opportunities for volunteer work in the myeloma community, and, most important, taking time for things I enjoy.

What a gift I've received — precious time, not only with my mother but also with my adult son, getting reacquainted as peers (well, after a fashion) after the sometimes-tense adolescent years, learning to see him through my mother's eyes (more forgiving than my own), and seeing him demonstrate his love and compassion for his grandmother and me, despite the pull of his own life and interests. Mom continues to teach me the valuable lessons of meeting each challenge with courage and humor and making each day count.

How about you? Have you had a wake up call? Write to me at DEXner@ExnerAssociates.com and tell me about it.

NAME THE NEWSLETTER CONTEST

My newsletter is currently unnamed. I've decided it would be fun to ask for your help! My first thought was some word or words that begin with EX but I will consider other ideas. I'll award a free month of coaching to the winner.

TIP OF THE MONTH

I had the pleasure of appearing last month for the third time on the program Radio Alchemy, along with fellow coaches Wendy Mackowski and Rae Booth and host Tony Maxwell. Our topic this time was "Spring Cleaning: How to Unclutter Your Life!"

Now, I'm a pretty organized person, but I am also a packrat! And I've been living in the same place for over 10 years now. So I've accumulated a lot of stuff. When a client of mine decided to set a goal of throwing out a box of stuff a day in preparation for moving day, I decided to take the challenge along with him. Only I upped the ante for myself — since he's moved more in the past few years, I've got more accumulated — my goal was 2 boxes a day.

It worked so well that we extended the time and are still discarding things! The act of clearing out some of the clutter made me crave more order so I went on to clean up and organize my office area, even moving furniture to a more workable arrangement (why didn't I think of that years ago?).

Try it. You'll like it (or at least the result). If accumulation isn't your issue, but organization is, take a tip from a recent David Allen newsletter (enewsletter@davidco.com) where his friend Peter Scott suggested setting a timer for 30 minutes each day, picking a spot, and cleaning it up until you run out of time. Decide whether each item is something you'll keep or get rid of. If you keep it, decide where it belongs and put it there. When the timer goes off, stop for the day.

This is a great example of taking a seemingly insurmountable task and breaking it down into a manageable chunk. I find I actually prefer to bundle a few of the 30-minute periods

together while still keeping them short and frequent enough to build up some momentum. So feel free to adapt the idea and make it work for you. The important thing is to pick a step you'll do regularly. See if you can enlist a friend to take the challenge with you. There is nothing like having an email show up in your inbox saying "I got rid of this and this. How about you?"

COMING EVENTS

Tuesday May 13, 6pm

What's Holding You Back?

Using Your Inner Wisdom to Silence Your Negative Self-Talk

Debra Exner, Wendy Mackowski and Rae Booth

Wilmington Women in Business, University & Whist Club, Wilmington, DE.

To RSVP or for more information, call 302-656-4411 or consult www.wwb.org

Tuesday, June 10 from 8-9 pm ET

How to Unclutter your Life!

Free Teleclass

Co-facilitators: Rae Booth, Debbie Exner, Wendy Mackowski

Maximum of 30 attendees. Contact me (DEXner@ExnerAssociates.com or 302-478-5919) to reserve your spot.

Sunday July 13, at noon

Executive Coaching

Host: Tony Maxwell

Guests: Debra Exner, Mario DiCioccio and Carol Marturano-Becker

Tune in to Radio Alchemy on WVUD, 91.3 or online at <http://www.wvud.org/>

SPREAD THE WORD

If you are ready to make changes in your business and personal life or know someone who is, I'm looking for you. As an individual client, you will receive an initial 2-hour Discovery session and then three 30-minute one-on-one telephone sessions per month, with email between sessions, if desired.

Curious? Email me at DEXner@ExnerAssociates.com or call 302-478-5919 to schedule a complimentary coaching session.

If you are enjoying this newsletter, please forward it to your friends and colleagues!

Thanks,

Debra Exner, CPCC

Business & Personal Coach

Exner & Associates

Examine, Explore and Excel!

DEXner@ExnerAssociates.com

www.ExnerAssociates.com

phone# 302-478-5919

coaching call # 302-478-1351

fax# 302-478-5992