

Your Past Lives – and the Future Lives You Influence

Dennis Hooper, copyright © 2011, published in the *Savannah Business Journal* on Monday, December 26, 2011

I had an experience last night that seems to happen frequently. As I meet new people and attempt to connect with them by sharing something we have in common, I find myself referring back to “past lives.” The experience last night was a reference to my appearance in a community theatre show almost thirty years ago! That memory has been filed away for an extended time in the deep recesses of my mind. Somehow, it popped to the focus of my awareness last night.

Does that happen to you? Does it feel almost as if the event or activity must have occurred in a previous life, surely not tied to anything in your life today?

The recollection is usually from what was once a very important and active part of life. Yet that life chapter has faded, and all that surrounded the situation seems to have been sealed off from conscious awareness. Even trying to recall the particulars often is difficult and vague.

Over the past several months, I’ve found myself in conversation with friends where we reflect back on experiences we shared that seem so very distant! They recall something that is vivid for them, but I have no memory of what they reference. And often they are not able to clarify my fuzzy memory; what I remember doesn’t even register for them.

Meanwhile, I’ve also experienced an increase in conversations where people are imagining what their lives might be in the future. This is where I want to engage your potential to be an inspiring leader.

Part of your job is to create an environment where those under your authority are able to use their gifts to excel in providing some unique service to an internal or external customer. My objective in this column is to encourage you to do that in such a way as to stimulate individuals to engage deeply their current emotions and creativity.

You are helping them create the memories that will someday be for them a “past life.” So, help them build invigorating, captivating experiences!

I met an old friend for breakfast a couple of months ago. He and I had been part of a team starting up a new manufacturing facility. We worked many long hours, my daughter had just been born, and I was attending graduate school at night. What a full period in my life!

My friend and I spent the morning reflecting. We had not seen each other for a very long time. Where have the years gone? We marveled that my daughter is now thirty-five.

How can that be? Didn’t I just turn thirty a few months ago? All that we discussed is so foreign today--the memories seem to be part of a past life!

I want you to pause and reflect on your past lives. Recognize that today will soon be a past life for the people you currently influence. Are you endorsing something that is worthy of your gifts, talents, years of experience, and potential? Are you contributing to those you touch in terrific ways, such that when they look back on a past life, they will appreciate that you were a major part of it?

The people you influence probably don’t wake up every day excited for another opportunity to work with you. Yet each person does have something in their lives that excites them. Do you know what it is?

Many books on leadership advise you to learn something about the people under your authority. I’m suggesting there is a very practical reason--for you and for them--for building that kind of personal relationship. Ask each individual you support what he or she dreams about relative to the future.

Then ask if there is some way that you can support the individual in becoming a more valuable employee while helping to achieve the personal goal. Most individuals never consider linking their income-producing jobs with their inspiring visions for the future.

Yet with a little practice, you can become very creative at connecting the two apparently disparate agendas. When you do, you make work more attractive to the individual, you empower the employee to be more productive, and you create the potential for exciting memories as the individual looks back with satisfaction to the “past life” when you helped him or her achieve something valuable!