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ChangeAbility
The Newsletter of Redpoint Business Coaching
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Welcome!

You are reading ChangeAbility, a newsletter brought to you by Urs Koenig PhD, MBA from Redpoint Business Coaching.

ChangeAbility is a bimonthly newsletter bringing you hands-on tips and cool resources for starting or building your business.

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I. I Urs Races Across America: From San Diego to . . . Albuquerque?
The Unexpected Challenges of Knowing When to Quit.

"Strength comes not from winning easy battles, but by losing hard fought ones."

-Aphorism

After having ridden almost 850 miles in a bit over three days, I found myself on the High Plateau of Colorado gasping for air and unable to tackle even the smallest hill. Ever since I had started cycling that morning, I had been coughing white foam and my vision was getting

progressively blurrier as the day wore on. To my crews' concern, I had to ask for supplemental oxygen (which we carried in the pace van) on even the slightest hills. Even though I put on a brave face when TV cameras appeared (see below), I knew I was in trouble.

From the TV crews' diary:

"Gravel spat off the fresh chip seal stretch of highway outside Durango, and there, just up the road from our media van, we saw our first rider of the fourth day out in the 2005 Insight Race Across America. It was Seattle's Urs Koenig and he was not having a good time of it. Struck down by an upper respiratory infection [later diagnosed as pulmonary edema, UK], Koenig was hurting in the high mountain air. The Swiss-born rider crawled up the small climbs, his support car right behind, urging him on. If there is such a thing as the death throes of a RAAM dream this was it.

Koenig put on a brave face, sparing time out from his internal struggle to answer a few questions about his race. But his speed was low, his pedaling labored, and it seemed impossible that this man could ride another 2200 miles in such a condition. But right up until the moment of his withdrawal, Koenig was resolutely positive about the RAAM experience.

'Overall it's been good,' " said Koenig. " 'I hope I can get my breathing under control and I'll be fine.' "

A photo taken shortly before my withdrawal:

http://www.raceacrossamerica.org/files/raam2005/2005_pics/2005_during/dslide58.htm

Shortly after the TV crew left and after yet another thirty painful minutes of barely getting anywhere, I decided that I needed to seek medical advice to learn what was going on. My crew loaded the bike in the van and marked the course where we left it (in case I would be able to continue later on).

The following 15 minutes would have been comical if it hadn't been so serious. Crew member Bruno drove like a maniac towards the next town of Pagosa Springs, CO, while crew member Shannon hung out the car window to keep the satellite phone pointed towards the sky while calling 911—the only means we had to get in touch with the closest medical facility. My bike mechanic Waz was trying to keep me from passing out by shaking me violently....

We finally arrived at the medical facility in Pagosa Springs where the mood of the friendly and competent staff very quickly changed from laid back interest to alarm when they discovered that my oxygen saturation was at 44 % (95-100 % is normal). Very quickly I was hooked up to several IVs, and given supplemental oxygen. At this point I still believed that I could eventually get back on the road, but the attending physicians quickly talked me out of it when an x-ray revealed fluid-filled lungs. The doctors informed me that I was suffering from high altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE).

Now it all made sense at last:

No wonder I had been laboring for the last eight hours and my breathing sounded like a bubble bath (literally!): I was riding at less than 50 % of my oxygen capacity while my lungs slowly filled with fluid.

So instead of riding my bike out of Colorado into Kansas, I took an unfortunate detour and was airlifted to the closest Intensive Care Unit bed in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

My wonderful crew drove all the way down to Albuquerque and supported me through the following difficult days of hospital treatment, while getting all the logistics of disbanding and returning our vehicles, sorting through and shipping tons of gear, clothes and food under control.

Three long days of driving back to Seattle and medical complications came next. But just as I'd come to expect, my crew took each unexpected event with an upbeat attitude.

So, just four days after starting the race full of hope and optimism in San Diego, my dream came to a screeching halt. Five days after that, our epic journey ended when we arrived back home in Seattle.

In spirit with the opening quote, here are the lessons I learned from our RAAM adventure:

ACCEPT WHAT YOU CAN'T CHANGE AND FOCUS ON WHAT IS WITHIN YOUR CONTROL

Many of us business owners are real believers and doers. Our strength is that we take things on and get them done (well, most of the time, anyway ;-).

We are often in denial when faced with things which are truly out of our control (how is that for denial: me hooked up to all sort of devices in the hospital in Pagosa Springs and still talking about continuing the race?). We tell ourselves: ‘this isn’t happening, I’ve worked so hard on this, it can’t be over.’

Yet, strangely enough, by facing up to and accepting what is truly out of our control, we free ourselves up to take charge of the things we can change.

YOUR PEOPLE ARE EVERYTHING

My RAAM experience has given me a new appreciation for the power of a team. There are too many examples and situations to quote, so here’s just one: On the day of my withdrawal from the RAAM, my whole crew was spent from virtually no sleep the previous few nights. They had to drive six hours to New Mexico and knew they were facing daunting logistical tasks over the next few days. Instead of turning in early for a well-deserved night’s sleep on the way, my crew tracked me down at the hospital and made sure to check in with me that same night.

Even though I know that each and every crew member is nearly as disappointed as I am about my withdrawal and all the effort they put into our unfinished endeavor, I never heard complaints or criticism, and I received nothing but great support.

ALLOW YOUR DISAPPOINTMENT TO SHOW UP

There are no two ways about it: I invested nine months of training and preparation into finishing the RAAM. Ending up in ICU was not part of the game plan. What a huge disappointment! And you know what, the macho voice in me told me on the day after my withdrawal: ‘Get over it, come on, that’s just the way it goes, move on, it could have been worse, etc., etc.’ All REALLY unhelpful thoughts!

I have learned from previous experiences that we need to give our disappointment some space in order to really work through it.

Only by allowing the pain, the tears, the screams of disappointment to show up are we able to really live our grief. And that is exactly what I did. And only by living and sharing our grief are we able to work through it. And only by working through it are we able to come back stronger and tackle our next challenge. No short cuts exist here; I am convinced of that!

(II) Upcoming Workshops

MINI RETREAT: LIFE CHOICES...CREATE A LIFE YOU LOVE AT ANTIOCH UNIVERSITY

This mini retreat helps you to reconnect with who you are and what you want. The focus is on change, renewal, balance and vision. I will be leading a session on 'Starting and Building your own Business or Private Practice.'

Date: Saturday Sept. 24 (all day)

Location: Antioch University

To register contact Muriel Dance, Director of Continuing Education:
mdance@antiochsea.edu; 206-268-4100

BUSINESS PLAN WORKSHOP AT THE U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA) – “BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS PLAN.”

Date: Wednesday September 14th (all day)

I will be teaching the Marketing Plan section of the Small Business Administration workshop 'Building a Business Plan' in downtown Seattle. To register and for more info on this and other small business workshops, see the SBA and the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) website: <http://www.sba.gov/wa/seattle/>, <http://www.seattlescore.org/index.htm>, or call the SBA at 206-553-7310.

WORKSHOP -- “STARTING YOUR CONSULTING BUSINESS”

Thinking of starting or improving your consulting business? This all-day workshop at the SBA/SCORE office in downtown Seattle will give you the tools to do so. I will be presenting during the panel discussion.

Date: September 21st

Location

SBA/SCORE Business Enterprise Center
Park Place Building
1200 Sixth Avenue (Sixth and University),
17th floor
Seattle, WA 98101
206.553.7320

Register online at www.seattlescore.org or call the SBA office at 206-553-7320 or toll free 1-877-732-7267

+++++LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU THINK+++++
Simply reply to this newsletter. I welcome your feedback!

ChangeAbility is a publication of Redpoint Business Coaching, which is
run by Urs Koenig PhD, MBA

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