



Leadership Matters

It has to be meaningful!

I was in Phuket just the other week and speaking at a conference for Optus Australia. Thailand for me these days is a very different place to what it was a number of years ago. The JW Marriott Hotel where we stayed with the Optus crew is also a very different place for me as well. You see, the ballroom in which the conference was held was our Operational Command Centre during the response to the Tsunami. So stepping back into that room brought up a number of emotions.

The emotion of stepping back into the room was to be only the start of things to come. Stories were told, emotions were shared amongst us all and a journey was taken. At the end of the keynote the 400 odd delegates then engaged in a team building exercise but with a twist. The delegates broke up into groups and then raced against one another to construct push bikes. Probably doesn't lift you off your seat with excitement at this point in time and that is ok. But what happened next did literally lift the delegates off their backsides and onto their feet.

You see, I was invited by the MC back onto stage and a question was posed to me if I knew anybody who we could give the bikes too. I then asked the delegates if it would be all right if we gave them to the kids of the Baan Tharn Nam-chai Orphanage that they had just heard about. This was received with thunderous applause.

With their permission I shared a story around the Gift of Giving and how these kids don't deserve second hand clothes just because they lost their parents, just because they live in an orphanage doesn't mean they only deserve things we no longer want or have a need for.

The Gift of Giving

I shared with them my vision of how the bikes would be received by the kids. I then asked the delegates if they would like to see the looks on the faces of the kids when the bikes were handed over. Again this was received with thunderous applause, we then swung open the doors and 60 kids with beaming faces and eyes as big as saucers ran into the room and to the group who had built their bike.

Without exception the delegates leapt to their feet and embraced the beauty and gift that comes from giving. Men and women stood and wept openly, I stood at the back of the stage and wept at the look of pure joy across the faces of the children and that of so many of the delegates.

As the children rode around the ballroom on their shiny new bikes, with their shiny new helmets and this sparkle in their eyes I witnessed the changing of lives. What became obvious to me, what became obvious to the MD and so many others was that given the opportunity people

are inspired more by giving than receiving. So my question to you is as adults do we not get more pleasure from giving gifts than receiving?

Do we not eagerly await Christmas morning for the looks on the faces of the kids as they open gifts that have been left for them? If this is truly the case why then do we seek satisfaction, reward and endorsement in the form of receiving?

Receiving bonuses which are at times beyond an average salary, receiving a pay rise as a means of measuring our worth? Is that really motivational, is that really rewarding?

Because what I saw in Thailand, what I see whenever I have delegates interact and give to the children of the orphanage is an outpouring of emotion that money just doesn't buy.

Prior to heading to Thailand, Optus had generously donated \$10,000 to Hands Across the Water. After meet-

ing the kids and sharing the experience of giving, the delegates then personally upped that to \$100,000. Why did they do that? Because they experienced first hand the joy that comes from giving.

So as leaders of ourselves, leaders of our families and as leaders of organisations what about if we tried to reward ourselves and those we lead by creating an opportunity to give in a meaningful and honest way.

Giving doesn't just mean parting with cash, the most rewarding and meaningful gift to give is of oneself. When was the last time you REALLY gave of yourself to your family, to your staff or to a stranger who needed a hand? Because giving in a meaningful and honest way is a trait of real leaders, and Leadership that really does Matter.