

ASPI NEWS

A Periodic Publication of the Association of Suppliers to the Paper Industry

Volume 13 Number 1
May 2016

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Mill Speakers a Highlight of 2016 ASPI Spring Meeting

With the highest member turnout for any Spring Meeting in more than ten years, the 2016 ASPI Spring Meeting offered a valuable opportunity for members to hear from customer companies in a professional atmosphere designed to foster communication. The 2016 Spring Meeting was held February 24-26, 2016 in Miami, Florida.

The program included presentations from the 2016 ASPI Award recipients and invited speakers, plus new member presentations, ASPI Board meetings, and networking events. (For more about the 2016 ASPI Award recipients, see page 5.)

Member Showcase

Thursday's program featured a new program segment: Member Presentations that gave three ASPI member companies the chance to introduce their products and services to their fellow members. Each presentation offered a first-hand look into a different corporate story.



Glenn Simmons, Jedson Engineering

ASPI member Glenn Simmons introduced **Jedson Engineering**, a privately-held,

integrated engineering, procurement, and construction management company that works with clients throughout the pulp and paper industry to improve productivity. Dan Donnelly introduced **SKF USA Inc.**, the U.S. subsidiary of AB SKF (Gothenburg, Sweden), a world leader in rolling bearings and related technologies including sealing solutions, lubrication systems, mechatronics, and services; twenty-eight of SKF's 140 global manufacturing sites are located in the U.S. Finally, attendees heard from Lynn Townsend-White, president and **CEO of Western Polymer Corp.**, with a look at how



SKF USA

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Mill Speakers a Highlight

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her company produces high-quality starch products for the pulp and paper industry (hint: ASPI members will never look at their french fries the same way again!)



Lynn Townsend-White,
Western Polymer Corp.

The program received high ratings from attendees responding to the on-site survey. “Great location, great topics, great speakers. This gets better every year,” wrote one attendee. “The member presentations were a very nice touch.”

To give members a chance for more informal networking, Thursday’s program concluded with an evening social event. A dinner cruise aboard the Venetian Lady yacht took advantage of Miami’s scenic coastal waterways for an event that rated highly with meeting attendees.



Attendees enjoyed informal networking at dinner aboard the Venetian Lady.

Customers Up Close

A key benefit to ASPI membership is the chance for members to learn more about the pulp and paper industry customers that drive their businesses. On Friday, the 2016 Spring Meeting included presentations from two mill speakers, plus a financial overview from a noted industry analyst.

Green Bay Packaging VP Mill Operations **Matt Szymanski** kicked off the morning by noting that the benefit of mill/customer networking extends both ways; in fact, Green Bay Packaging’s corporate mission includes suppliers. “For me as a customer, it’s



Matt Szymanski, Green Bay Packaging

The company has 90 years of experience producing custom corrugated and graphic packaging, displays and folding cartons. GBP is a privately held company and has been managed by three generations since its founding in 1926 by George Kress. The company has more than 35 locations across the U.S.

A history of employee commitment and engagement has helped Green Bay Packaging become one of the most respected players in the containerboard industry, Szymanski noted; to illustrate, he shared a short video featuring veteran papermakers from GBP’s

Arkansas Kraft division recounting their days in the industry. This focus on the “people” side of their business impacts two other critical areas: safety and training.

Szymanski noted that GBP has made a lot of efforts to support employee safety, including involvement in the TAPPISAFE program (tappisafe.org). The company has created a successful “culture of safety” with impressive results—including one plant with a record of 26 years without a recordable incident.

Training is also important, said Szymanski. GBP operates a state-of-the-art training center at its Arkansas Kraft Division in Morrilton, Ark.; the curriculum that the company developed has provided a pathway for more than twenty hourly operations personnel to become top journey mechanics and electricians.

Szymanski urged ASPI members to share their expertise regarding both of these critical industry issues. “We invite you to approach us with ideas about training and safety—as our vendors, I challenge you to share ideas about improving our programs,” Szymanski said. In particular, industry suppliers can help their mill customers understand where any gaps exist in their own training and safety programs. “This is something we look for in our vendors: ‘bench strength’ and employee development,” he said. “As vendors, you can drive value for us by helping with our own employee development.”

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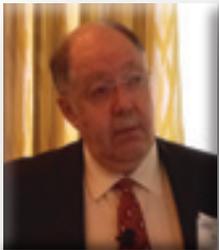
Mill Speakers a Highlight

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In the packaging industry's ever-changing business environment, process- and grade-flexibility are both important to Green Bay Packaging. This offers vendors another way to build a strong working relationship and contribute to their customers' success. "As your customer, we need your help in identifying opportunities to develop that flexibility," Szymanski said.

With a goal of operational excellence, GBP is not interested in what Szymanski called "transactional" business. "We're ultimately working toward strategic relationships that can stand the test of time," he said. "And we need to become better, as customers, at sharing our vision with you."

In Friday's next presentation, **Warren Allan**, VP Procurement for Resolute Forest Products, echoed the importance of industry safety:



Warren Allan,
Resolute Forest
Products

"(At Resolute) we've done some remarkable things with safety — we all have, as an industry. But it's never good enough. We take it very seriously."

Formerly known as AbitibiBowater, Resolute is headquartered in Montreal, Quebec, and had 2015 sales of \$3.64 billion. The company has more than 8000 employees and markets products in almost 80 countries around the world.

The company is "quite the family," Allan noted, with 21 wood production facilities, two tissue

mills, and 19 pulp and paper mills across the United States, Canada, and Asia. Allan also noted that 100% of Resolute's managed woodlands in Canada and the United States is audited and certified by independent third parties.

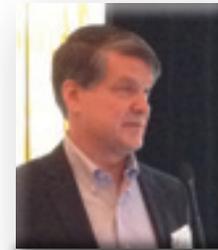
Allan said that the company is currently undergoing several important strategic projects. At Resolute's Grenada, Miss. mill, the company made modifications to convert the thermo-mechanical pulp (TMP) process to inter-stage screening with long-fiber refining; Phase II of the project will be completed in 2016. The technology reduces the electricity used to manufacture mechanical pulp at the facility.

The company is also building a new tissue machine at its facility in Calhoun, Tenn. This \$270 million project, which includes a Valmet NTT machine, will produce premium tissue (bath/towel) for a major private label. Allan noted that the project will help Resolute become a key player in the tissue market by 2017.

Every project must reflect Resolute's commitment to sustainability issues, which Allan reports is a key corporate value directing not only the company's operations, but its relationships with suppliers. It's a commitment that Resolute expects its vendors to share. "Some suppliers practically hang up the phone" when they learn what Resolute requires contractually in terms of environmental compliance and product safety—"but we expect of you what we expect of ourselves," Allan said.

Industry Outlook

Experienced industry analyst **Chip Dillon**, CFA, Vertical Research Partners, concluded Friday's program by giving Spring Meeting attendees an in-depth look



Chip Dillon, Vertical
Research Partners

at critical factors impacting the pulp, paper and packaging markets. He also offered a strategic outlook for the industry.

Overall, "there is more good news than bad news," Dillon said. His presentation provided ASPI members insight into which sectors are expected to see growth, and outlined the economic and sociological trends creating that growth.

Dillon first addressed what he termed "the decliners": newsprint and coated paper. He said that analysts predict that, over the next 10 years, newsprint demand will continue to decline; younger consumers in all markets, including developing markets like China, are expected to rely solely on digital media for news, while older consumers will transition gradually away from traditional print markets toward digital media. The coated paper market will decline more slowly than the news print market, said Dillon; while e-commerce (which creates some demand for print catalogs) will actually help the coated paper market stay alive and slow its decline.

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Mill Speakers a Highlight

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Uncoated paper is a stabilizing market, said Dillon. The biggest losses to the uncoated paper market were when consumers moved away from using uncoated papers for data storage (in document form) and bill paying; now that those losses have been weathered, direct mail and office use will continue to provide some demand, Dillon predicted.

“The growers” are three markets that Dillon feels will show gains in the coming years: containerboard, tissue, and wood products. “Consolidation has created much more discipline,” for the containerboard market, he noted. In 1982, the top 11 producers accounted for 38% of the U.S. containerboard market; today, the top five producers cover about 80%.

While demand for containerboard in the U.S. has been flat in recent years, global containerboard demand has been growing in line with global GDP.

In addition, Dillon predicts that the U.S. containerboard market is poised for growth. The manufacturing areas that are seeing the most stability and/or growth are in what he called “non-durables,” such as food, where demand for packaging remains constant—as Dillon noted, “we eat food every day.”

In the tissue arena, growth in demand comes with population growth, he noted. In addition, “we’re seeing migration away from store brands toward private label.” For the wood products market, the

market driver that matters most is housing. Even there, other factors at work could impact growth.

“We think it’s going to get better, but we could be massively surprised,” Dillon said of the housing market. “Builders want to build houses, but there is no one to do the work. The industry needs to train more people to put in HVAC systems, for instance.”

Plan now for next Spring!

The 2017 ASPI Spring Meeting is scheduled for **February 22-24, 2017** at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Sarasota, Florida. Keep up to date on program developments and more at www.aspinet.org. ♦

WestRock Will Host 2016 Fall Customer Alignment Meeting

A SPI is pleased to announce that WestRock will host the ASPI 2016 Fall Customer Alignment meeting, the ninth customer host of ASPI’s Customer Alignment Initiative (CAI). The meeting is scheduled for **November 16-18, 2016** in Peachtree Corners, Georgia (northeast suburban Atlanta.)

Meeting attendees will have the opportunity to learn more about the 2015 merger that formed WestRock, creating a global-class packaging company with approximately 275 manufacturing facilities around the world, plus research labs, corporate offices, and sales facilities. “We have brought together two highly complementary organizations to create a company with leadership positions in the global consumer and



corrugated packaging markets,” says Steve Voorhees, WestRock CEO (and recipient of ASPI’s 2016 Executive of the Year Award.)

With a focus on innovative, market-responsive packaging, WestRock operates around a core belief that “packaging matters to our customers and consumers,” as noted on the

company website. ASPI Fall Meeting attendees will have the opportunity to learn more about trends in the packaging industry, WestRock’s unique corporate culture, and effective leadership from a customer point-of-view—as well as gaining insight into what a leading packaging company needs from vendors to maintain successful growth.

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WestRock Will Host

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Customer Alignment meetings give ASPI members the rare chance to network with their customer's senior executives. With a program focused around strategic directives, discussions go beyond day-to-day issues and provide a better understanding of broader customer issues and priorities.

Registration for the 2016 Fall Customer Alignment Meeting will open in Spring 2016. Learn more about WestRock by visiting www.westrock.com; check www.aspinet.org for updates on registration and program information. ♦

2016 Fall Meeting Hotel Information:

Hilton Atlanta Northeast
5993 Peachtree Industrial Boulevard
Peachtree Corners (Norcross), GA 30092
(770)-447-4747

Voorhees, Forst Accept ASPI Honors

Each year, ASPI offers two distinctive awards: the ASPI Customer Executive of the Year Award, and the ASPI Excellence in Leadership Award. These awards allow members to honor the achievements of their customers in a way that promotes ASPI's mission of supporting industry performance.

The 2016 ASPI Award recipients are Steve Voorhees, WestRock, as the ASPI Customer Executive of the Year; and Don Forst, International Paper, recipient of the ASPI Excellence in Leadership Award. Both were on hand to accept their honors at the 2016 Spring Meeting held February 24-26 in Miami, Florida.



Steve Voorhees accepts the Customer Executive of the Year Award from ASPI President Mike Grey and incoming President Keith Kemp.

Voorhees on 'winning together'

In his keynote presentation accepting the Customer Executive of the Year award, Steve Voorhees, chief executive officer, WestRock, thanked the supplier community.



Steve Voorhees of WestRock delivers the keynote presentation at the 2016 ASPI Spring Meeting.

"We make more than 40 million of these a day," Voorhees said, holding up a small corrugated box. "To make money at it we need to do it very efficiently. It's made out of paper, and the quality of that paper makes a huge difference—which means that

you people in the room, and your companies, make a huge difference."

Previously, Voorhees was chief executive officer of RockTenn. Prior to his appointment as CEO of RockTenn, he served in various executive leadership roles, including president and COO. He holds a bachelor's degree in economics and mathematics from Northwestern University and an MBA from the University of Virginia Darden School of Business.

Voorhees noted that, in spite of a popular perception that paper and paperboard are commodity products, as a packaging producer he sees how they are highly specialized for a range of uses. WestRock's research has shown that, for consumers, packaging is as important as brand when it comes to overall product satisfaction. In fact, 73% to 85% of purchase decisions are made at the point of sale, said

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Voorhees, Forst Accept ASPI Honors

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Voorhees; package design plays a key role because it's often the only factor that differentiates two products on shelf. "If you take the time to notice our products in the store, you'll see what a terrific business we're in," he told ASPI meeting attendees.

Voorhees also offered insight into the management philosophy he has used to lead WestRock on a successful path of growth and change—a philosophy reflected by the new logo that WestRock adopted following the 2015 merger between MeadWestvaco and RockTenn, which created the company. The name WestRock was formed by combining name elements from the two merging companies. "I'm almost embarrassed to say we hired a name consultant, but we did," Voorhees said. "The most important thing they did was to actually consult our employees."

This employee feedback was critical to setting a successful path forward, he noted. "The employees are the ones who came up with the slogan 'winning together,' because that's the company they wanted to work for."

According to Voorhees, the five "layers" of the new logo represent five types of people the company needs to work with to be successful: customers, investors, coworkers, suppliers, and the community. The color orange represents safety—"and we put that in the middle, because safety is central in everything we do," Voorhees said.

For suppliers, WestRock has set a three-year target for combined merger-related synergy and performance improvements to total \$1 billion—approximately two-thirds of that to be achieved

within the first two years. Reducing duplications in corporate expenses and continuous improvement efforts across manufacturing operations will also contribute to achieving the goal. Said Voorhees, "a company that provides high quality products and services, partners with WestRock to identify and deliver long-term value, offers productivity solutions to improve operational effectiveness, is an innovation partner focused on commercial excellence, and understands our business objectives and values—for WestRock, that is a valued supplier."

Forst offers leadership perspectives



Don Forst, International Paper, offers his perspectives on leadership at the Spring Meeting.

philosophies that have helped him achieve success. One such influence was his father, a veteran papermaker. "I had an opportunity right out of college to work at the mill where my father had worked for 40 years," Forst told ASPI meeting attendees, "and I learned that a lot of my dad's friends were people he'd worked with from the supplier community."

Forst earned his MBA from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, and a BS in Chemical Engineering

from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He joined International Paper in 1997 at the company's Texarkana, Texas, coated paperboard mill. Forst became mill manager at the Prattville, AL containerboard mill in 2007 and moved into his current position in early 2013. Prior to coming to IP, Don held numerous positions during a more than 12-year career with the former James River Corporation.

In the early years of his leadership responsibilities, Forst said that one of the most important lessons he learned was "there is a lot I don't know." He found that he could learn more by listening than by talking, and that learning who he could trust, as well as learning to trust his own instincts, were also critical steps toward growth as a leader.

That initial idea—"there is a lot I don't know"—were also key discoveries at both the middle and later stages of Forst's leadership development. Along with growth in leadership also comes a growing awareness of the leader's true responsibility, he said. "As you move into higher leadership positions—to where you're leading an entire facility—you begin to realize that people aren't just looking to you, they're depending on you, their families depend on you," he said. "And the spotlight is always on! You can't just stop being the mill manager at your son's basketball game, or out in the community."

A trusted mentor taught Forst that "either you like being a leader or you don't. You can develop the skills—but you also need to develop a passion for it."

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Voorhees, Forst Accept ASPI Honors

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Three key leadership characteristics stand out for Forst: transparency, consistency and predictability. These core values also apply to the relationship between mills and suppliers, Forst remarked. “In this industry, you need a trusted partner. I believe that’s true in any industry, but it’s particularly true for our industry. We have something unique in our industry in this regard.”

As a case in point, Forst spoke about his company’s experience in hosting the 2014 ASPI Customer Alignment meeting in Memphis, Tennessee. “That meeting was really



Mike Grey and Keith Kemp present Don Forst with the 2016 ASPI Excellence in Leadership Award.

valuable; for International Paper, it was all about building relationships,” he said. “We saw that our supplier group is very engaged, and we share a lot of common ground.”

Nominations open for 2017!

Nominations are now open for ASPI’s 2017 Awards. Nominations are accepted from ASPI member companies, and the ASPI Board of Directors votes on submitted nominations. Visit the ASPI website at www.aspinet.org for nomination forms and a list of past recipients. ♦

Welcome New ASPI President Keith Kemp!

ASPI is pleased to welcome its new president, Keith Kemp. Keith currently serves as the Vice President Paperchine Sales – Americas for AstenJohnson. He joined AstenJohnson in 2001 and previously worked in the field as Shoe Press Business Leader, as North American Marketing Manager and as VP Regional Sales. Prior to AstenJohnson, he started his career with Willamette (now Domtar). He worked for Domtar and Champion for more than 15 years in a variety of roles, including superintendent at Hamilton, OH, Courtland AL, and Hawesville, KY. Keith has been a TAPPI member for more than 30 years; he and his wife Karen have two daughters.



Keith Kemp, AstenJohnson

ASPI is governed by a 12-member Board of Directors. Board members serve for staggered three-year terms, resulting in a new class of four Directors elected at each annual meeting. Officers are elected for two-year terms after being nominated by the Nominating Committee, which is chaired by the immediate Past President. The newest class of officers was elected during the ASPI Spring Meeting in Miami in March, 2016.

ASPI is proud to introduce its newest slate of Executive Officers, and thanks them for their service to the Association. ♦



Outgoing President Mike Gray (right) welcomes Incoming President Keith Kemp to his new role with ASPI.

New Members

ASPI has welcomed three new member companies so far in 2016:

Headquartered in Pasadena, Texas, **Dixie Chemical** is a market leader in the development of high-performance specialty chemicals including alkenyl succinic anhydrides as paper sizing agents.

Kuraray provides performance-based polymer and synthetic chemistry technologies and was the first company in the world to bring PVOH synthetic fiber to market. The company operates 19 subsidiaries

around the world, including Kuraray America, Inc.

Printpack Inc. is a privately-held, vertically-integrated packaging solutions provider focused on flexible packaging, specialty rigid

containers, labels, and medical packaging. Headquartered in Atlanta, GA, Printpack has multiple manufacturing sites in the U.S., Mexico, and China. ♦

Student Startup Turning Heads by Using Biofuel Waste for Good

By David Goddard, Coordinator of Media Relations, University of Tennessee College of Engineering

A zero-waste manufacturing process has long been a dream for industries, especially in areas where businesses believe their byproducts hold great potential.

In the production of biofuels that waste product is known as lignin—a pulpy, fibrous mass remaining after plants are processed. It can comprise as much as 70 percent of the material created by biofuel refining, so any advancement in finding a use for it holds obvious monetary and environmental potential.

Enter Tony Bova and Jeff Beegle, a pair of doctoral candidates in the Bredesen Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Graduate Education, which is run jointly by UT and Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

The pair has developed a process to turn that lignin into a product that would aid both the Earth and the people who work it, quite literally turning one person's trash into another one's treasure. "Lignin is a naturally

occurring product found in all trees and grasses that results in 50 million tons of waste a year in the paper



TerraFilm biodegradable mulch film, made by Grow Bioplastics, is designed for home farmers and gardeners and is made from a natural waste product from the paper and pulp industry, which allows the product to degrade into the soil.

industry alone," said Bova. "We have developed a process that allows us to make that lignin biodegradable and turn it into the large rolls of mulch film that farmers use to block weeds, retain moisture and soil temperature, and improve crop yield."

Bova said that currently only 2 percent of lignin winds up in commercial use, with the vast majority of it making its way to landfills or being burned by producers as a low value fuel. At the same time, he noted, farmers spend as much as \$300 per acre to dispose of the current plastic they use on their crops.

"Our product would be able to be plowed into farmers' soils after harvest, where it would degrade

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Student Startup Turning Heads

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naturally and save them all of the money they currently spend on removal and disposal,” said Bova.

Bova and Beegle, who first met as undergraduates at the University of Toledo in Ohio, developed the technology along with ORNL’s Amit Naskar. Their partnership was cemented when they worked as teammates in the Bredesen Center’s team entrepreneurship course led by Tom Rogers—also the director of ORNL’s Industrial Partnerships—and Beth Papanek, another Bredesen Center student with experience in entrepreneurship and tech transfer.

Calling their company Grow Bioplastics, they have entered a number of entrepreneurial contests and other clean-tech competitions around the country. They were recently awarded the \$7,500 Grand Prize in the Charlotte Venture Challenge. Locally, they won first place in the Boyd Venture Challenge and won \$1,500 in the Vol Court Pitch Competition.

“If we have continued success, we’ll be looking to set up our own research and development lab soon and applying for Small Business Innovation Research grants

to further fund our testing and product development,” said Bova. “Everything is happening so fast, and we’re still working on finishing our PhDs, but it’s all so exciting.”

Bova said each win brings them closer to their goals, and they could begin field-testing prototypes as early as this summer, with full-scale field trials of their biodegradable plastics used on crops throughout Tennessee next spring.

To learn more about Grow Bioplastics, visit <http://www.growbioplastics.co>. ♦

The Power of Beliefs

By Scott Hunter

Are you clear about what you believe? Do you understand what motivates you to do the things you do? Are you satisfied with the results you're presently producing?

There is a definite cause-and-effect relationship between your beliefs and your results. Stated simply, your beliefs determine your thoughts and emotions, those determine your actions, and your actions determine your results. In the world of cause-and-effect, beliefs are the cause and results are the effect.

Changing our beliefs

A belief is a thought you repeat to yourself over and over again because you think it's the truth. Where do those thoughts come from? Studies indicate that, by the time you were five years old, 50% of the conversation you live in, where your beliefs exist, was already there and by the time you were eight years old, 80% of the conversation you live in was already

“In the world of cause-and-effect, beliefs are the cause and results are the effect.”

there. By the time you were eight years old, you typically received about 25,000 hours of programming.

The reality is you didn't actually decide the vast majority of things you believe. You took for granted and adopted everything you were told by your parents, friends, teachers, television, etc. What's so interesting to me is that, in the face of this overwhelming evidence that people didn't decide what they believe, those same people are determined to be right about their beliefs, no matter how disempowering they may be.

If you lived in the 1400s, you

believed the earth was flat. If you lived in the 1950s, you believed it was impossible for a human to run a mile in four minutes. Now we look at those beliefs as bizarre. But today, the majority of beliefs that dominate our culture are even more bizarre. Just look at the facts: 90% of all businesses fail, 90% of the people on the planet make \$25,000 a year or less, 7 out of 10 American workers are checked out or actively disengaged, people are unhappy, 1/3rd of the country is on anti-depressants, and on and on. What drives all of that?

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The Power of Beliefs

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Albert Einstein said, “the most important decision we make is whether we believe we live in a friendly or a hostile universe.” Notice his statement is about what we believe. If you consider his statement and ask yourself “OK, what do I believe?” I am sure you will say you believe you live in a friendly universe. Yet that’s not true—if you really examine the truth, you would see how much you believe that a hostile universe is the source of all the challenges you face in life and business.

How about redefining all of your beliefs as thoughts: thoughts that may be true and thoughts that might not be true? This requires you to recognize that your beliefs got you where you are, and unless you are willing to examine them and be open to adopting some new beliefs, tomorrow is going to look exactly like today. Then start questioning everything. Learn to hang out in confusion and uncertainty and see where that takes you. This can be life-changing.

“Language, and the way you use it, is critical to moving forward in changing your beliefs.”

It may also be easier than you think, because all of our beliefs and all of our thoughts live in language. No language, no thoughts and no beliefs. So language, and the way you use it, is critical to moving forward in changing your beliefs.

Here’s the challenge: people wake up in the morning, look out at their world and conclude that what they see is actually there. But how often to you find that others look at the exact same person or circumstances and see them completely differently than you? All the time!

Consider that your eyes do not work the way you think they do. When you awake in the morning and open your eyes, your eyes are acting like the lens on a projector to project your beliefs and your thoughts onto a neutral world. This is why the 7+ billion people on the planet all live in a different reality. You are the creator of your reality and you do it with language. The function of language is not to report what’s “out there,” but to create what’s “out there.” This is why it’s not as difficult as it might seem to change your beliefs.

Again, change your beliefs, change your results. In my book *Unshackled Leadership*, I write “your tongue is like a paintbrush. Every time you open your mouth, you paint a picture for yourself and everybody around you to live in. As humans, we are usually unconscious of what comes out of our mouths. I’m asking you to stop that. Wake up. Listen to your thoughts and to the words you say. Decide in advance what you will

say about everything and everybody. Then start saying that! It will change your world, your life, and the world and lives of all the people around you. Best of all, doing so will put you on the path to being a twenty-first century leader.”

Choosing happiness

A perfect example of this is how humans relate to the whole experience of joy, satisfaction, passion and enthusiasm. I use all of those words to point to the same thing. Everyone seems to have a picture of how they would like their life to be. Then

they compare that picture to what is actually there in front of them. Given that the way it is is rarely, if ever, the way we would like it to be, there is no possibility of authentic satisfaction and joy. When I ask people to give themselves a score on a scale of 1 to 10 for their overall level of joy and satisfaction, the scores are almost always 8 or less. This is all because we believe that our satisfaction comes FROM the circumstances of life.

But what if it isn’t that way? What if you chose to believe that your satisfaction, your joy and your passion is all up to you? What if those feelings live in language, which you have access to? IF the ONLY reason you want the things you want in life is because you think they will bring to you the feelings of satisfaction, joy and passion— why not choose to have those feelings now, and bring those feelings with you on the journey to have what you want? You can actually choose to be a 10 right now. Why wait?

Another example of this is how humans relate to the whole experience of happiness. When you ask most people what they really want, the answer most times is “to be happy.” If you ask them if they are, the answer is usually “no.” We have been taught to believe that happiness is all about climbing the ladder of success until you reach a point where you can achieve “the American dream:” the house with the white picket fence, 2 or 3 car garage, etc. Trouble is, all the way up the ladder, people are unhappy. No matter how high you go, you never seem to get to where you need to be to be happy because you’ve been

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The Power of Beliefs

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carrying your unhappiness along with you all the way.

Of course, in this scenario, money becomes very important. You have to have more money than you have because that is what will allow you to buy these sources of happiness. So people become workaholics, work 2 or 3 jobs, and do anything to make more money. But it's never enough. In many families, how money is made and spent is something that people often fight about.

When you spend your life preparing for the future rather than enjoying the present, you end up postponing your happiness to some time that may never occur. Is that really what you want to do? And here's the best news of all: choosing to be happy right now will go far in attracting to you all the things you want, which will just add to and support your happiness.

I'm inviting you to change your beliefs: choose to believe that your happiness is a choice you make in each moment about how you experience that moment, not a state to get to one day. You can actually choose to be happy right now.

A final example of this is how humans relate to others. The moment we meet another person—whether we realize it or not—we judge them. And when you connect

with someone you already know, the first things you recall are all the judgments you have made in the past. So fundamentally, who people are for us is our story about them and that story normally consists of only our judgments. This wouldn't be a problem if our tendency was to judge people positively. The problem comes because we tend to do just the opposite. When I ask a room full of people to share with me the not-so-nice thoughts they have ever had about another, I get answers like: fat, ugly, stupid, idiot, uncommitted, phony, smelly... you get the point.

What's the alternative? Well, if the true function of language is to "create" what's there, how about inventing who people are? Rather than judging everyone you meet, decide in advance who people will be for you. When I ask the people in my rooms what some of the nice things they could say about people, I get answers like: nice, pretty, brilliant, kind, fun, playful, elegant... hopefully you get the point here too. Here's what I decided a long time ago: that I would relate to all people as brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous, and amazing!

What's the "truth" about people? Who cares—the only thing that matters is what is true about people for YOU! This is critically important. Your effectiveness with others is a

function of how you view the world, yourself, other people, and life in general. If you think the way you view the world is based on how it "is", you're stuck. But if you accept that the way you view the world is up to you, you can have it be however you want it to be. That's exciting!

You have control

In conclusion, consider the possibility that you have had far more control over the quality of your life and the quality of your relationships than you ever imagined. Consider that at any moment, regardless of the circumstances, you can choose to be happy and satisfied, to appreciate and feel grateful for what you already have, to be surrounded by brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous people, and to stop waiting for life to turn out better. Because you know what? Your life has already turned out, and this is what it looks like. This. Right now. It all lives in your thinking and your beliefs. Are you satisfied or not? Are you happy or not? Choose. ♦

About the author:

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