

J. Michael Locke

Musings

#13: The Power of Positivity

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There is a growing academic field called Positive Psychology. I was first exposed to it through a fellow DePauw alum, Doug Smith, who was a very successful businessman who found himself in a battle against cancer. This battle led him to significant reflection and resulted in a book which I highly recommend as a quick read (Happiness, the Art of Living with Peace, Confidence and Joy).

Yale launched a course along these lines and it was their most popular class ever. It is now being offered free online through the MOOC company Coursera.

My experience is people do not follow someone who is negative. This is especially important in a growing, entrepreneurial company. You are building something. I am not saying you have to be Mr. Happy like the Roger Hargreaves kids' books, but positive. Especially in times of challenge (like our current environment) folks want to know it is all going to work out (which it will!)

I think this is why you see more leaders coming from sales than from finance or law. Sales people skew towards the positive. They bet on themselves with unlimited compensation via commissions. They spend their time persuading others to join them. Accountants and lawyers skew more negative. They think critically and break down larger concepts into detail. They are paid to make sure things are protected from potential negative events in the future. Certainly, someone with a finance and legal background can be a good leader, but they have to fight their skeptical orientation.

A couple Covid 19 related items. Zoom usage has risen from 10mm users in December to 200mm this month! Be careful about "Zoombombing" where folks randomly dial in and prank your calls – protect passwords. I am hearing from smart doctors (and now the CDC) you should cover your mouth and nose if you go to places like grocery store. It doesn't have to be a N95 mask but rather can just be a cloth mask or you can pull up your turtleneck. Personally, I ordered a Huk Neck Gaiter like the southern fishing guides wear.

Let's also have a shout out to the beauty of entrepreneurship in this crisis. It can come from unexpected places. Here is one from Jeff Dobosh. A kindergarten teacher who was trying to adapt to shelter at home posted on Facebook live and has gone from scratch to 650k daily views. Click [here](#) for the news story.

Be Safe.

Jml

Here is my latest in new office design (Chenequa, Wisconsin). Maybe more remote working is another positive C19 result?

