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Practice What He Teach

Lisa M. Benson
CEO / Principal

This past week I was fortunate enough to spend seven glorious days with Bhante Wimala, a Sri Lankan Buddhist Monk, at his mediation sanctuary located in rural Prague. (Go ahead and get the laughing out of the way as you think of me being quiet long enough to actually participate in any sort of meditation.) Bhante is a spiritual advisor, unparalleled worldly humanitarian leader and my friend. I appreciate that in some cultures my referral to “friend” would be considered improper. But, frankly my four year relationship with him is so personal I can’t think of a more appropriate American word to describe him. How about this - my celestial twin of a different mother.

We’re very much alike, both spiritually grounded, generous, compassionate, business minded, hard workers, funny and energetic to an absolute fault. We thrive on results and rewards that come from the physical and psychological worlds. Our hearts are enjoined in our commitment to making a difference in people’s lives. He affirms my life’s work, while teaching me boundaries within my accomplishments as I identify those I can’t help. I relish the blessings received through my professional leadership, albeit my results pale in comparison to his story of a recent wheel chair distribution completed in Kenya. The recipients of which dragged their bodies as much as ten miles for a chair, only to be told they were all gone. When asked how he can look them in the eye and send them away, he replies “There will always be suffering in the world, and I am pleased to help those that I could.” Shouldn’t we use the same technique with our employee base? As business

people aren’t we more effective in working diligently to service those we can elevate, while turning away those who will not deliver? Bhante’s concept of extreme improvement of few is far more rewarding than accepting mediocrity from the masses.

We differ in our responsibilities, as I run a computer based capitalistic enterprise and he creates water purification systems, medical camps and permanent housing development for the world’s most desperate beings. His responsibilities reside on a higher plane of humanism and I am but mortal in my attempts to engage others. I visualize his management style incorporated into his charitable work. Instead of massive ego driven programs of NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations), he focuses on incremental life sustaining projects that require small amounts of money. “Lisa, these people are suffering and in immediate need.” referring to his time during the tsunami in Asia, “They need a safe, comfortable place to live and key necessities for life, not an over developed plan.” Causing me to think of what is important in this industry and appropriate client responses – Are we solving issues or just creating new problems?

Bhante’s life and message is representative of our collective responsibility to our society, corporate governance, employees and clientele. His sets the example for all of us in creating reasonable deliverables for our own organizations which incorporate vision, compassion and value based human development. A man of simple means provides a profound message, it’s our responsibility to listen.

Lisa Benson is the CEO and Co-Founder of Ellipse Communications, Inc.; the largest provider of custom applications and website development for the Multifamily Industry. Visit the company website at www.ellipseinc.com.

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