

# The Page



Notes and comments for friends and clients of Lisk Associates

April 2011

## What Do You Want?

It is April and I am in UK basketball withdrawal. The Cats made a great run to the Final Four this year. Karen and I drove to Houston to the game, only to see them come up a bit short on the score. I think they overachieved for the year—and I'm ready for next season.

### Who Are You For?

As March Madness was just starting I was getting some groceries at the local Kroger. Of course the banter at the check out was about the upcoming games—who are you rooting for? Etc. One young man who was bagging groceries said he was rooting for, “Anybody but Kentucky.” “I hope they lose,” he said, “so everyone will quit talking about it.”

I looked around, thinking there might be a camera from the What Would You Do? program hidden in the candy bars. Seeing none, I gave the checkout lady a glance. She just shook her head, as if to say, “This is not my problem.”

You must understand, the interest and fervor over Kentucky basketball is usually a positive thing that helps us all get through the winter. It is something we can be for. Yet here was this young man not being for someone else, which would have been bad enough, but being against the Cats.

I wondered how many of that young man's decisions

and actions were based on things he didn't want. It can get to be a nasty habit. It did not take much to get my imagination going. I don't want to go to work. I don't want to go to school. I don't want to pick up my room. I don't want to root for the stupid Cats.

### Want To or Have To?

If someone's life is not a 'want to' life it becomes a 'have to' life. “I don't want to go to work, I have to.” Every life, to some extent, has some 'have tos' in it. The key for me is to minimize those.

What percent of your life is want to and what percent is have to? Are you satisfied with that split? If not, get creative and take some action to change the ratio. It is mainly about the story you are telling yourself. You may need to tell a better story. Check out your stories to see what part you are playing. Are you the victim or the creator? Are you the designer of your own life? If not, who is?

### Focus Defines Reality

The main problem with concentrating on what you don't want is one of focus. Your focus defines your reality. If I focus on what I don't want, my brain is still thinking about that thing. If I think to myself, “I don't want to be nervous during this speech.” that does not calm

me down.

Being clear with yourself about what you want and what is most important to you is the starting point for your own personal leadership. Everything is created twice, first in someone's mind, then in reality. If you are not mentally focused on what you want, chances of it showing up in your life are slim.

Those of you who have taken our RealTime™ Coaching workshop will recognize “What do you want?” as one of the four basic coaching questions. We ask that question so people can think about what their behavior needs to be to get what they want.

### What Is On Your List?

The situation in the grocery reminded me of a quote from my good friend Steve Morris. He was coaching someone who told him what they didn't want. Steve replied, “Do you go to the grocery with a list of things you don't want to buy?”

“What do you want” can be a tough question to answer. Perhaps the person has not taken the time to think about what he or she really wants in this particular situation. Perhaps the person feels trapped or has given up hope on a dream, although the dream may still be waiting inside her. Perhaps the person is living someone

else's version of what their life should be. Someone might say, “My dad was an accountant and I am going to be an accountant in the family business.” There is nothing wrong with that as long as that is the vision, mission, purpose, what ever you choose to call it for that person, and not one that has been given to him by some well-meaning person.

### Knowing And Doing

Knowing what you want is necessary but not sufficient to get it. You also need a plan of action and enough self-management to keep yourself moving towards your goal, particularly when things don't go as planned. But notice where all things start—in the imagination. The first step is to spend time thinking about what your ideal future looks like. Can you describe it to the extent that you will know it when you see it? If not, you have a little work to do. Once you have it, look at the gap between the present and that future. Ask yourself each day, “What one thing can I do today to reduce the gap and move me one step closer to my ideal future?” Notice that, even if you are going two steps forward and one step back, you are still in charge of your future. You are not the victim. You are your life's designer. That is a story worth telling.