



'Complex to
Simple'

3. Resilience - Control the Controllables



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[Complex To Simple]

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"The way you look at a problem, is the problem."

Einstein



LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER – IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE!

My last article asked whether you thought you were in control of your life or whether you felt things happen to you. It mentioned that resilient people feel in control of their future and the results they get.

This article explores the idea of being in control a little further. First consider two questions:

1. Have you ever ridden a roller-coaster?
2. How did the experience feel? Try to remember the build-up (generally a two-hour queue!). What was it like to be strapped in? The slow click, click, click, as you were pulled to the top of the first incline. And finally that moment as you roll over the edge and plummet down the first drop.

Roller-coasters give us the ultimate feeling of lack-of-control. We relinquish all responsibility for what happens to us for a brief few minutes. It's an exciting, and for many, a frightening, experience that taps into something deep within us.

Can you imagine being on a rollercoaster for half an hour, or an hour, or maybe a whole day? Spending a whole day suffering ups and downs and having no control over when to stop, start, slow down or speed up. It would be a draining experience probably leaving you physically and mentally ill.

If you are choosing to live at effect that is what you are doing; suffering life's ups and downs without any feeling of control. In other words not feeling in control of your life and the outcomes you get.

I believe a sense of control is a fundamental need for all people, but often when faced by challenging situations we focus on things outside our control.

"We have to concentrate on the elements we can control. We are only human; some things are beyond us. I can't control the weather, I can't control the referee (although sometimes I may have tried!) or the bounce of the ball. But what you can control is your own performance."

Lawrence Dallaglio, World Cup winning England rugby team.

Richard is approached by his manager one afternoon and asked to make a presentation to an important customer the next day. Richard hates making presentations, so instantly starts to worry and think the following:

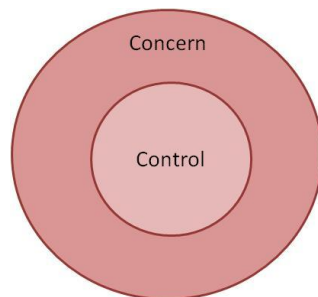
- What if I fluff my lines?
- What if the customer is in a bad mood?
- What if the customer doesn't like what we are proposing?
- What if there's a traffic jam and I'm late?
- What happens if the laptop doesn't work?
- What if the customer doesn't like me?

Richard's thinking is dominated by 'what if' thinking, generally about things he cannot control.

We'll come back to Richard in a moment.



When thinking about the factors affecting any situation they can be grouped within two circles:



- Circle of control – the things that you can directly control or positively influence
- Circle of Concern – things that you can worry about, but not control or influence (the classic area for concern being weather!)

The resilient approach to a situation is focusing your attention on things that are either directly within your control, or those that you can positively influence. Your aim should therefore be to move as many things into your circle of control and focus your attention there.

When we last looked at Richard he was involved in lots of 'what if' thinking very much contained within the circle of concern. With a little help Richard could move all of his concerns into his circle of control.

RESILIENT THINKING

Un-Resilient Thinking	Resilient Thinking
What if I fluff my lines?	I must write a focused presentation, with clear prompt cards, and practice presenting it to someone.
What if the customer is in a bad mood?	I can't control the customer's mood, but I can make sure that what I have to say is relevant and useful to them.
What if the customer doesn't like what we are proposing?	A thorough needs analysis has been undertaken, so I must make sure my presentation demonstrates we have listened to what they want and meets their needs.
What if there's a traffic jam and I'm late?	I can't control what happens with the traffic, so I'll allow extra time for the journey. Even if there is a traffic jam I should still make it on time. In the event of a major hold up I'll make sure I have the customer's phone number and my mobile is fully charged.
What happens if the laptop doesn't work?	I can call the customer in advance and clarify what equipment they have and ensure they have technical support. I can also check the laptop in advance of leaving. The best thing might be to write a presentation that is interactive and does not involve technology, and not rely on the laptop.
What if the customer doesn't like me?	Whether the customer likes me is not important, it's whether I make the sale. However, people buy from people they like, so I must make sure that what I present is relevant to the customer, and I must make sure I listen and observe throughout the presentation to adjust to the customer's needs.

"We can't direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails."

Maritime saying



SUMMARY

The next time you are faced with a challenging situation write down all the things that concern you about it then take some time to reframe them as controllables. Focus your energies there. This approach can be taken with any situation and brings all the factors back within your control.

Next time I'll look at another element important to being resilient – Having Purpose

Victor Frankl, author of “Man’s Search for Meaning” spoke of his time in the concentration camps. He told that the Nazi’s went to great lengths to remove all control and choice from people’s life. This meant removal of hair, all personal possessions and freedoms, and yet even here Frankl said that those who survived were the ones that maintained control of the one choice that was left to them – their attitude.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Game Plan – Dr Steve Bull

Man’s search for meaning – Victor Frankl

If you’d like any further information on developing Resilience or Resilient Leadership, please contact nick.cooke@cts-consulting.co.uk

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