

*Burke Hedges'*  
***Success X Factor***  
*Positive Change for a Better Life*

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***"Life is not what happens to you, but what you make of it!"***

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This month I would like to talk to you about taking action. How often do we miss opportunities by procrastinating or waiting until we are 100% positive about something. Taking action before we can see the whole picture takes courage and faith in your abilities to handle whatever happens. Most people are paralyzed by the fear of the unknown rather than are excited by the possibilities. This newsletter will talk about that fear and how to find .....

***The Courage to Take Action***

*"You don't drown by falling in the water.  
You drown by staying there."*

**- Edwin Louis Cole**

Have you ever seen the movie *Moscow on the Hudson*, starring Robin Williams? It's a delightful comedy set in the 1970s about a Russian circus performer who defects to America while on tour in New York City.

Robin William's character is named Vladimir, and when we first meet him he's playing the saxophone in the Moscow Circus Band. Although in his early 30s, Vladimir lives with his parents in a cramped, run-down apartment in Moscow. His best friend, Anatoly, is a circus clown who dreams endlessly about defecting to America.

***Action Speaks Louder Than Words***

Both men end up in New York when the Moscow Circus plays Madison Square Garden. The two friends are dazzled by the wealth and freedom available to Americans, and Anatoly the Clown keeps up a steady conversation to his friend about defecting when he finally gets a chance.

Robin Williams' character, Vladimir, dreams of freedom, too, but he keeps reminding his friend of the realities of defecting: They don't speak much English...They have very little money...and the Russian secret service is watching their every move. If they tried to defect and failed, they would be sentenced to life in a Siberian prison camp.

A small window of opportunity to defect is opened when their bus to the airport stops for a 10-minute shopping trip at Macy's department store. At the end of the brief shopping spree, as the Russian secret service men are pushing everyone toward the exit, the two friends' eyes meet. Anatoly the Clown looks over at the secret service man, who has turned his back...and then over to a Macy's security guard. Now is the time to act!

Suddenly, Robin Williams' character runs over to the security guard, throws his arms around him and shouts, "I DEFECT! HELP ME! I DEFECT!" The secret service men try to drag him back, but the Macy's security guard radios for the police.

When the dust settles, we see Russian secret service men desperately trying to persuade Vladimir to board the bus with the rest of the circus troupe. But the defector refuses. His dream of living in America is finally realized.

### ***Heaven Never Helps the Person Who Won't Act***

The camera cuts to the other circus performers staring solemnly out the bus windows. The camera pans down the row of sad faces until it stops on a tear-streaked face pressed against the glass. It's the face of Anatoly the Clown, who didn't seize his opportunity when he had it.

The lesson of this scene is about THE COURAGE TO TAKE ACTION! You see, Anatoly the Clown talked a good game, but when it came right down to it, he didn't have the courage to back up that talk with action.

Robin Williams' character, on the other hand, let his actions do the talking for him. Both men had the same dream...to enjoy the freedom that America has to offer. In fact, Anatoly's dream for freedom was probably stronger than Vladimir's.

But only one of the two friends ended up living his dream...the other didn't.

Only one of the two friends returned to a life of oppression and hopelessness...the other didn't.

Only one of the two friends had the courage to act...the other didn't.

*"Heaven never helps the person who will NOT ACT,"* observed the Greek philosopher Sophocles more than 2,000 years ago. It just goes to show you that some things never change...and that the key to success today is the same as it was 2,000 years ago. And it will be true for the next 2,000 years: **ACTIONS speak louder than words.** Always have...always will!

You know, it's blatantly obvious to anyone with a lick of common sense that nothing happens without action. "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction" is one of the basic axioms of elementary physics.

*"You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step."*

**- Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Most of the reasons for procrastination have to do with "internal barriers," like fear, anxiety, indecision, perfectionism, etc. I call these barriers the Demons of Inaction. Traditional therapies generally suggest that you must conquer such demons through various strategies such as insight, self-talk, motivation, or increased self-esteem. But rather than vanquishing your anxiety about the job interview, why not simply take your anxiety along for the ride. I suggest you accept their presence, as unpleasant as that may be, and move forward anyway. If you can learn to do this, the demons lose much of their power and many of the causes of our inaction naturally dissolve into constructive effort.

One of the most common obstacles to getting things done is fear. Strong feelings bubble up inside us. Our body tenses up. We begin to imagine the road up ahead -- failure, embarrassment, rejection, discomfort, pain, even death. In the face of fear we may find ourselves "frozen" in an iceberg of inaction.

But fear is not necessarily our enemy, although it feels that way. Fear can make us think twice about risky behavior. It can warn us to tread cautiously. It can remind us there are consequences we'd rather avoid. A surge of fear may prompt us in a healthy direction, in spite of the fact that it is disruptive to our inner harmony. Fear can be an effective, if not gentle, personal coach.

But sometimes fear arises when we are not in imminent danger at all. We're moving forward toward our dreams. We're taking action that involves risk -- yet all action involves some risk (even inaction involves risk). How do we stay on course when fear is making our hearts pound and our palms sweat? How do we keep fear from preventing us from doing what is important to do?

We learn the skill of coexisting with fear.

The best strategy for coping with fear is to accept it. Don't try to fight it, work through it, understand it, or conquer it. Acceptance. The Japanese use the term *arugamama* to describe the state of "accepting things as they are." Many forms of martial arts use a similar philosophy. Rather than taking on your opponent directly, you use the energy of your opponent against him. That's why a 120-pound woman can throw a 200-pound man. We defeat fear by refusing to fight it -- by refusing to give it our attention. Instead, the effort goes into the task at hand, whether it be changing careers or jumping into a new relationship.

What is the secret of mastering this strategy for coping with fear? Practice.

#### ***4 Simple Steps to Feel the Fear...And Do It Anyway!***

##### **1. Feel It.**

This can be the most difficult step. It's natural to want to get past our fear and not feel any anxiety. In our attempts to "overcome" fear, we tend to sometimes ignore it or suppress it... That doesn't always work. All our fears have a specific purpose, and the only way to uncover a fear's purpose is to start by accepting it -- by feeling the fear.

##### **2. Express It.**

Talk to someone about your fear. This can be a friend, a colleague, or just someone you trust. You can also talk yourself through it. What's going on? What specifically are you fearful about? Take the time to explore your emotions.

##### **3. Appreciate It.**

Perhaps we're not well prepared, and that's why we're fearful. The fear is giving us a signal to prepare. Perhaps we've prepared as much as possible, and the fear is telling us that we simply need to build our confidence around the issue. Believe in yourself -- you have gotten through difficult and challenging situations before. Fear can give us powerful signals that can make a big difference, if we listen and act upon them.

##### **4. Use It.**

Fear can make our bodies shake -- smile and look excited. Fear can make our hearts pound -- use the adrenaline rush to boost your passion and determination. Take action! This isn't easy; it just takes remembering and practicing. Soon, you'll love the sensations of fear, because they'll propel you to do the things you once thought impossible.

***Then.... Take Action***

What's going on in your life that you want to move forward on? Is there something that you've been fearful about and haven't taken any action towards?

Now is the time. Feel the fear.....and Do it Anyway!

Until then, remember...Life is what we make of it – make it a great one starting today. Right now.

Seize the day!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Burke Hedges". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B".

Burke Hedges