

So What Are You Going To Do About It?

By David B. Burns

Even though some events in your workplace are out of our control, the outcomes of those events are determined as much by your response to them as by the events themselves.

The initial events may be out of your control, but your responses are not.

Even seemingly good events have dramatically different outcomes, depending upon a person's response. You've seen examples like this in the news. Two people win the lottery and share a \$100 million prize. They each experience the same event, but two years later each winner has a different outcome.

One winner squandered the money and is now homeless and broke. You don't, however, hear anything about the other winner. That's because the second one invested wisely and now owns a beach-front house in a warm climate. The event was the same; the responses were different, which makes the outcome different. There are four main ways to respond when things "happen" to you. The first three of these I learned from my best friend Lenny.

Lenny and I each graduated from college in the mid-1970s. A popular activity at the time for people our age was to "find" ourselves (hey, it was the 70s). Lenny not only went off to find himself, he went to the world headquarters of finding yourself at that time – California. He lived there a few years, and when he returned he shared some of his experiences. One memorable experience he shared was about a popular personal development course he attended. Participants learned that when the stresses of life weighed them down, they had three options (please remember, this was the 70s):

You can dig it.
You can bitch about it.
You can dig bitching about it.

For a while I thought this was good advice until I learned from a mentor that the most important option was missing. So here is my revised four-part version:

You can dig it.
You can bitch about it.
You can dig bitching about it.
You can do something about it.

You can dig it, by rolling with the punches and accepting what you can't change (no, this is not a 12-step program, but it's good advice anyway). You can bitch about it by getting together with others and complaining. You can dig bitching about it (getting together with others who enjoy your complaining). Or, you can do something about it, which is the only one of the options that influences the outcome.

Ultimately, you have the power to choose your response, and therefore, the power to affect the outcome. So when things don't go perfectly, remember you have more than three options. Go for the fourth option, and ask yourself one of the most powerful questions there is, "What am I going to do about it?"

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David travels the country working as a business trainer, speaker, and consultant to organizations ranging in size from micro-businesses to Fortune 500 firms. He brings diverse training and knowledge to every presentation, including a degree in Education, advanced degrees in multiple martial arts, and the practical hands-on experience of running his own businesses since 1980. With his trademark optimism and sense of humor, he shares his experience in terms everyone can relate to, put into practice, and benefit from immediately.

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