



DAVID REILING  
Sunrise Banks

Know thyself. Be self-aware, discover your ambitions, and live them. To do that, think about these three questions:

- What's one thing that both motivates and fascinates you?
- What are your unique abilities?
- What is the BIGGEST future you can imagine for yourself?



MARK RIGBY  
RIE Coatings

“Have fun, be strong, and back your instincts.”



stages  
theatre company  
SUSAN SWENSON  
Stages Theatre Company

“Stay curious and be kind.”



CHAD SIMONS  
Sugar Lake Lodge

“Take chances. Continue to learn, laugh more, give more, love more. And as Winston Churchill said...“never, never, never give up!””



LINDA WEDUL  
MNCPA

“Everyone has a secret and powerful weapon. It is your attitude. Use it wisely.”

STUDIO/E



“If you stay true to your desire, and iterate within your boundaries, you cannot fail!”



BOB WEISS  
Alerus

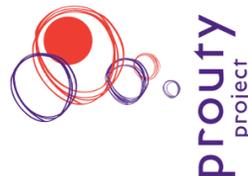
“Have a positive attitude every step of the journey.”

NOT PICTURED:

- Ralph Balestriere, Red Wing Shoes
- Griff Davenport, DLR Group
- Karen Grandstrand, Fredrikson & Byron
- Jon Hemple, NorthStar Midstream
- Rob Holt, Super Radiator Coils
- David Novak, SPS Commerce
- Beth McGuire, UnitedHealthcare
- Keith McNamara, McNamara Enterprises, Inc.
- Steve Peterson
- Dr. Jeffrey Thompson, St. Jude Medical
- Mandy Tuong, InFaith Community Foundation

Strategic Planning • Organization Development • Board and Team Development

6385 Old Shady Oak Road, Suite 260, Minneapolis, MN 55344  
proutyproject.com



L<sup>3</sup> A COHORT-BASED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Open enrollment is open for a unique cohort-based leadership development program beginning in 2016. Our L<sup>3</sup> program focuses on Leading Self, Leading Others, and Leading the Business.

For more information please contact Christie Devine at christina.devine@proutyproject.com.

www.facebook.com/ProutyProject



## Journey to Best of...

In 2009, we set a 20-year BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal), with the following three elements:

- 1) Elevate our clients to achieve their “best of” status.
- 2) Achieve recognition as an international top 10 boutique firm.
- 3) Build \$1 million in our STRETCH Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation to advance systemic change.

As our journey to 2029 continues, we are so proud and excited to be working with companies making great headway on their own “best of” status. Recent “best of” wins for our clients include: being named a best place to work, earning recognition as a best company for leadership development, diversifying to mitigate cyclical, being acquired for \$143 per share, being in the top decile in employee engagement scores, merging to create a \$1.6 billion Upper Midwest enterprise, and orchestrating a seamless CEO transition.

We'd also like to recognize all those folks who have referred business to us in the past year. You mean a lot to us. We wouldn't be on our own path to “best of” without you, and we always appreciate your referrals.

This quarter, our team is looking to Sam Smith's new keynote speech, “Journey to Best Of,” for inspiration. From the \$250 million bank to the \$125 billion publicly-traded company, early feedback on Sam's speech has included rave reviews. We think you'll enjoy his wisdom as well. If you'd like to learn more about having Sam speak to your group, give him a call at 952-942-2922 or drop him a note at sam.smith@proutyproject.com.

And we encourage you to come visit soon. While we were in Cuba for STRETCH Expedition 2016 (March 11 – 20), our Creative Think Tank was refreshed and remodeled. New year, new colors, new look, new feel. A special thanks to Perkins+Will (Tony Layne and Jamey Berg) and Greiner Construction (Steve Amis and Bruce Copenhaver) for all your help in the refresh.

Keep stretching and have a fabulous 2Q 2016,



Jeff Prouty  
jeff.prouty@proutyproject.com

### “C” NOTE QUOTE:

“There's no formula for successful co-creation. Each is different. We've found that something incredible will result as long as we begin the journey with amazing people, agree on a destination, and move together towards it transparently and open to possibility.”

### Know the quote?

If you know who said this quote, please send an email to: melissa.gennert@proutyproject.com or call 952.942.2922 by **Monday, May 2**; one guess per person. If we have more than one correct answer, we throw those names into a hat and draw the winner of a \$100 gift card.

### Last issue's “C” Note Quote winner is...

**Hal Cropp, Commonweal Theatre Company**

**Hal knew that successful entrepreneur Wiley Cerilli said the following: “Moments that break you from your routine are what define you.”**

**Congratulations, Hal!** Hal says, “I'll be using my hard-earned prize to realize a childhood dream, to swim with the manatees in Crystal River, FL in three weeks, as my

wife and I take a well-deserved vacation, adding to our bucket list desire to visit as many national parks as possible while our health is still with us.”



Hal Cropp

## Referral Recognition

A very special thank you to the following individuals who introduced us to new clients in 2015! We always appreciate our clients and friends sending us new business referrals.

We asked each of them to share a piece of wisdom they've found useful on their own “Journeys to best of.” We hope you enjoy their perspectives as much as we did.

*A special congratulations to Jerry Johnson, who was randomly selected from the pool of referrals as the winner of the \$1,000 donation to the charity of his choice. Jerry has chosen to donate the \$1,000 to the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation. Thank you, Jerry!*



JACKIE BOUCHER  
Children's HeartLink

“Make a conscious choice to live your personal core values in all that you do—personally or professionally!”



MATT GOLDBERG

“Consistently slow the h@#! down to:  
1) find your unique value that you provide for others  
2) find a way to do more for others than anyone else with “your value” in your business, personal relationships, etc.”



JERRY JOHNSON  
The Thinkery

“Be deliberate and conscious of how you spend your time. Time is the most valuable asset any of us will ever have, and how we spend it impacts everything we do, everything we want to do, and everybody we encounter. How we spend our time speaks volumes about what and who we value. Choose wisely. You can't buy more, and ultimately, we will all be remembered for how we spent our time.”

OAK RIDGE  
HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER

“Be honest with yourself and to others. Go with your gut and never be afraid to take chances. Do not be afraid to challenge others, stand up for yourself and what you believe, and to go against the grain sometimes.”

# A Monk's Guide to Mental Toughness

For 10 days this past December, I focused on nothing but the breath coming in and out of my nostrils.

I had undertaken a 10-day silent meditation retreat at a Vipassana meditation center near Rockford, IL.

The rules of engagement were quite simple. I could not speak. I could not make eye contact or gesture to my fellow meditators. I had to hand over all communication methods. No reading. No writing. No music. No exercising. No technology. No stealing. No lying. No intoxicants. No killing (including bugs). No outside food or beverages.

I had agreed to a monastic lifestyle.

In exchange, I was graciously given two vegetarian meals a day, a 2-foot square on the floor of the meditation hall, and a small foam cot to sleep on. With my existence stripped to minimum, all that remained were my thoughts, which I was to observe diligently and objectively during a meditation schedule that started at 4:00 a.m. and ended at 9:30 p.m.

Silence is a relentless, formidable teacher. And focusing the mind only on the breath and sensations in the body is a lesson in continual failure. Like a miner panning through sand and sediment, I sifted through every thought. Seemingly insignificant memories. Frustrations at the sounds my fellow meditators were making in the room. Utter boredom. Dreams of what would be waiting for me when I got home. Intense emotions from sadness, to anger, to panic, to bliss. Songs like "The Hustle."

Through this expedition, a pattern emerged. The experience was but a microcosm of the ups and downs of life. I recognized that mental toughness and resilience for any journey in life and in business can come from a few simple precepts:

## Eliminate Distractions

Robin Sharma once said, "Competition isn't ruining your business. Distractions are."

Distractions are some of the sneakiest saboteurs because they are often disguised as comfort. I hadn't realized how much I use material goods, relationships,

and food as pacifiers until they were taken away. It was only in removing them that I could see the landscape clearly for the first time.

Simplicity can be a catalyst for profound thinking, complex problem solving, and meaningful action. What comforts might you be clinging to that are preventing you from focusing on the right things to advance?

## Reserve Judgment

For three days I sat cross-legged on the floor with a searing pain in my upper back. By day four, it had disappeared. Real wisdom comes from recognizing and accepting that every experience is impermanent. Everything in life follows the same cycle of arising and passing away.

Being able to live through each experience without imposing judgment creates an inner balance. When you can accept all outcomes – not clinging to the good or avoiding the bad – life's ups and downs become less overwhelming. You can choose to act in ways that will create happiness for you and for others.

What attachments or aversions might be preventing you from creating happiness for others?

## Remember the Bigger Picture

Our teacher, S.N. Goenka, shared with us the following parable:

"A king asked several blind men to determine what an elephant looked like by feeling parts of the elephant's body. The man who felt a leg said the elephant is like a pillar; the one who felt the tail said the elephant is like a rope; the one who felt the trunk said the elephant is like a tree branch; and the one who felt the tusk said the elephant is like a solid pipe. The king explained to them: All of you are right. The reason you're telling it differently is because each one of you touched a different part of the elephant."

Our reality is determined by our perceptions. Broadening our perspectives provides more complete wisdom. When we start to see that everything is a manifestation of our thoughts, we can change our experiences merely by changing those thoughts. What opportunities might you create by taking a different view?

Competition isn't ruining your business. Distractions are.

—Robin Sharma

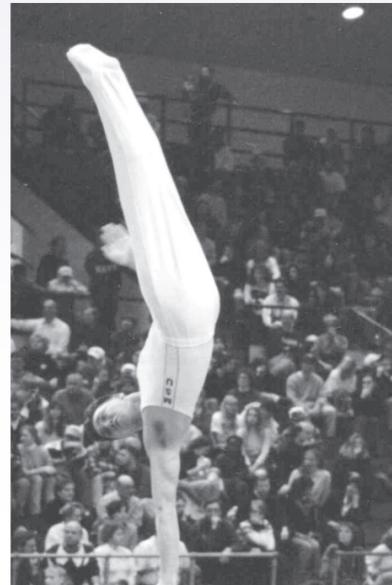


by: **Andrea West**  
andrea.west@proutyproject.com

# Journey to Best of: How Curiosity Leads to True Growth

*We often speak of life as a journey. While that may sound cliché, it is quite accurate, especially in comparison to a trip. Trips are fairly rigid, driven by reaching a destination. A journey, on the other hand, is fluid and inspired by continual exploration. Many people, it seems, can more easily view life's flow of unexpected circumstances as a journey of learning and growth. And yet, when it comes to their companies, their careers, and their work, they approach the experience more like a trip.*

*Over the past 20 years, I've recognized three powerful choices we can all make to help get us out of the "trip" mentality to elevate our individual journeys. These are: embrace curiosity, activate insights, and take action.*



Sam competing

## Embrace Curiosity

Since the age of 3, gymnastics has been part of my journey, and my competitive experience culminated as captain of the Michigan State University men's gymnastics team. I love gymnastics because it is built on curiosity. I'm amazed by the thought that every high-flying skill we see was first attempted by an athlete who had a very low likelihood of successful execution. In fact, gymnasts are conditioned to expect less than perfect (and sometimes even disastrous) performances early in the development of a new skill. To progress, they need to continually ask themselves, "What if..." in the context of complete fearlessness.

Can you imagine a gymnast asking, "What if I fail when I try this new skill?" Initial failure is almost a certainty. And yet elite athletes know that failure gives them the opportunity to diagnose where they are starting and identify the small steps they need to take along their journey to perfect each skill.

**So often in business we ask "what if" in the context of fear vs. opportunity. How might you take your business or career to a new level by modeling a mindset of curiosity focused on possibility?**

## Activate Insights

Curiosity is the first step to greater insights, but it's no magic bullet. Hitting on a relevant insight requires the right mindset and the right environment.

Growing up, I spent a lot of time in the garage with my dad. My dad had grown up the youngest of four siblings with a single mom who did her best to provide for the family by finding work, getting help from relatives, and navigating the welfare system. In that environment, my dad learned to be very resourceful, a skill he carried throughout his life. As a result, we had a nice workshop with all the tools and spare parts we needed to create, build, and repair things around the house.

We were always in the garage working on something that never seemed to go as planned. Whether we were fixing a vacuum cleaner or replacing an engine in an '85 Chrysler LeBaron, it

followed a similar process: start project, get stuck, wrestle with problem, put down tools, walk away.

As my dad's apprentice, I would watch diligently to see what he would do during the walk away phase of the process. Sometimes it was another project. Sometimes it was just sitting on the couch reading the paper or watching television. Regardless of the activity, it eventually culminated with an, "Ahh...I've got it!" And we would head back in the garage to ultimately resolve the issue.

At the time I didn't know my dad had created a process to activate insights. However, looking back at his process of getting unstuck, his solutions always came when he had created a bit of space from the problem.

Many have written on the topic of how to gain better insights. What I've seen in practice has reiterated the need to quiet our minds first for the insights to surface. David Rock writes about the neuroscience behind the phenomenon of insights occurring while we're resting, walking in nature, showering, or listening to music. The challenge is to develop the discipline of setting aside time for our brain to do its best complex problem solving.

**How might you set aside time to give your brain the space it needs to solve complex problems?**

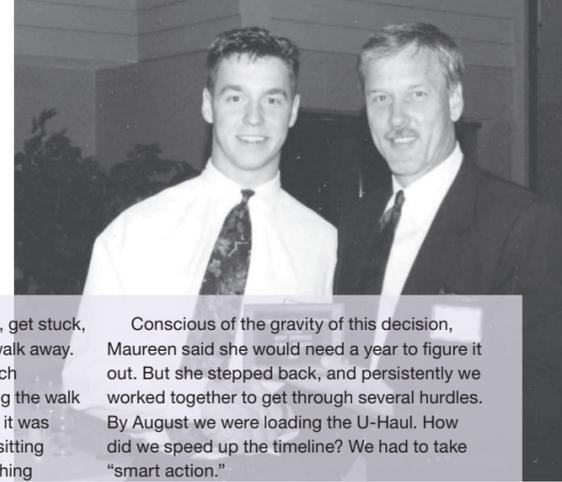
## Take Action

Embracing curiosity and activating insights are only valuable practices when followed by action. The greatest leaders of our time have not only had brilliant thoughts, they also have had a bias toward action.

What keeps us from taking action? I believe there are two common obstacles. One is fear. The other is being overwhelmed from being too close to the problem or from overthinking the process.

My wife, Maureen, and I dated long distance for a couple of years. The time came one January when we felt we should make a decision to move beyond phone conversations and weekend visits every 4-6 weeks. I asked her to move to Minneapolis, MN from Lansing, MI. This however would not be just her move. She'd be bringing Emily (5), Charlie (4), and Natalie (2). This was clearly a life changing decision to be made.

Sam and his dad



Conscious of the gravity of this decision, Maureen said she would need a year to figure it out. But she stepped back, and persistently we worked together to get through several hurdles. By August we were loading the U-Haul. How did we speed up the timeline? We had to take "smart action."

Those who readily jump to action can tend to see the possibilities through an overly optimistic lens, while those slower to move can tell you all the reasons something won't work. You probably naturally lean one way or the other, and I'm guessing you've been on projects and in meetings with both types. Taking smart action requires a balance of the two mindsets. It doesn't mean insisting the best will come to pass, nor does it mean looking for all the reasons to maintain status quo. Smart action sounds like, "I don't know if this will work. I will choose to believe that it can. There are known and unknown challenges for which we must prepare, and we can do that while moving forward."

**What opportunities in your business can be realized by taking smart action and how might you begin to build a habit around taking action?**

As we journey through life and work, I encourage you to stretch beyond what is known to achieve what is seemingly unimaginable. Contact me at sam.smith@proutyproject.com for more information on how I can help inspire your team on their "journey to best of."



by: **Sam Smith**  
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# Leadership for Legacy

In one's "journey to best of" we rarely know what experiences will cross our paths. It is up to us, however, to see every experience as an opportunity. This, I believe, is the legacy of leadership – to try to integrate and learn from each of our experiences, to lead a life worth passing on.

Twenty-three years ago, in 1993, I was nearing the end of a graduate program for a Master's of Science degree in Experiential Education at Minnesota State University – Mankato. I was teaching an undergraduate class of mostly first-generation college students the importance of leadership, the value of consequence in the wilderness, philosophy from John Dewey, and concepts like Hero's Journey by Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey.

Still on my own leadership journey at that time, I recognized there was even more I could be doing to become the type of leader that they wanted to follow. Now that I've been invited back to the Minnesota State University – Mankato College of Business to serve as the Morgan Thomas Executive-in-Residence, I can't help but

reflect on my leadership journey. With myriad experiences behind me – circumstances and relationships that have shaped and formed who I am and how I have chosen to be in the world – I have a new appreciation for how they were an essential part of becoming a better person and leader. I can now see I had to lead myself through each of those experiences before I could effectively lead and teach others.

We've created a cohort-based program to help emerging leaders create a legacy for themselves and the businesses they are leading. It offers an intensive, collaborative, and experiential environment for leaders at all levels in the organization to gain the self-awareness, social awareness, and strategic tools needed to drive better results in their organization and in life. We hope you'll join the next cohort at Sugar Lake Lodge in Grand Rapids, MN, for a three-part development journey designed to inspire, energize, and equip you to make an even greater impact as a leader, with your teams, and on behalf of your organization.

## 1 LEADING SELF AUGUST 8-10, 2016

- Identify your strengths and opportunities to become the leader your people desire
- Develop mindsets, tools, and skillsets to expand your influence and drive better results
- Create a plan to chart your growth and development

## 2 LEADING OTHERS OCTOBER 24-26, 2016

- Acquire new ways to build and sustain high-performing teams
- Learn frameworks to effectively coach and develop colleagues
- Build individual and team resilience

## 3 LEADING THE BUSINESS JANUARY 16-18, 2017

- Discover how to inspire innovative solutions
- Gain tools for strategic thinking, planning, and action
- Better articulate and present your vision

"We had over 50 applications for 18 spots in our first cohort. Our emerging leaders participated in a very powerful process of thinking about their own leadership styles and how the business operates from top to bottom. People get excited when they see opportunity in the future. And from a leadership perspective, we gained invaluable input and thought leadership from the organization."

—Bob Lund, CEO of SFM

If you would like to learn more don't hesitate to contact me at peter.bailey@proutyproject.com.



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