

HAVE YOU DONE
ENOUGH?

This is one of a series of occasional papers prepared by The Dilenschneider Group to bring clients and friends a different perspective. We hope you find it of interest.

HAVE YOU DONE ENOUGH?

The U.S. Army used to have the slogan, “Be All You Can Be.” In this no-one-has-enough-time age, an era of next-day deliveries, of instant global tweeting, blogging and posting, of national obsessions over the “next new thing,” there is another aspect of the old Army slogan that bears consideration: “Do All You Can Do.”

Most of us have had that sinking feeling after completing a work project or even a small household task that we could have done more, given it more effort, approached it with more energy or put more thought or creativity into it.

We provide little more than lip service and try to convince ourselves that we have done enough. But knowing we haven’t given it our all eats away at our self-esteem, that all-important inner self confidence that has nothing to do with what the world thinks of us or what material successes may have come our way.

THE GLOW OF DOING A JOB WELL

Conversely, when we have put in maximum effort, when we *have really done enough*, there is no better feeling. It is a feeling of accomplishment, self-worth and pride. That feeling has an amazing way of fueling further positive activities. There is nothing better than that glow of having accomplished something well, of giving it that extra effort, of having done a routine job better than expected, of looking backward with pride and forward with hope. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Enthusiasm is the mother of effort, and without it nothing great was ever achieved.”

The same goes for our relationships. So many of our day-to-day relationships are superficial. We engage in small talk, but fail to engage with each other on a significant level. When the other person is suffering, going through personal or health crises or other tribulations, we don’t see it until it is much too late to be of help. Our connectivity has disconnected our empathy.

Sometimes we bow to a phony goal of being professional at all costs so that we can avoid being confronted with another's misfortunes. Better to keep an arm's-length relationship than acknowledge another's problems. Better not to get involved.

This phenomenon was underscored in a lecture recently delivered by Bill McGurn, Editorial Page Editor of *The New York Post*, where he said, "The test will come in the everyday things of ordinary life: whether you are faithful to your wife, whether you are a father who puts his children before himself, whether you are honest and true with those you deal with. Most of all, it will come in those moments when you have a choice: to sit quietly on the sidelines or to stand up for what's right and true, especially when standing up for what is right and true means mockery and derision and exclusion."

It is so easy to give ourselves an excuse. We know in our hearts we aren't bad people. We know we are busy. We have families to consider.

In the movie "42," the story of how baseball legend Jackie Robinson became the first person of color to play on a Major League team, Harrison Ford as Brooklyn Dodgers General Manager Branch Rickey recalls a black player on his college team who was ostracized because of his color. "I could have done more," Ford says in the movie. "I could have done more."

While Rickey had his regrets, the lessons learned from his college days ultimately propelled him to do the right thing and sign Robinson.

POSITIVE ACTIONS MAY CHANGE THE WORLD

How often have we closed our eyes to another's problems only to find out that the problems were too much for that person to bear. A colleague's death. A neighbor's loss of home or job. Sometimes there is nothing we can do except extend the hand of friendship or a gift of time and genuine sympathy. Often, though, there are more profound ways we can help. Sometimes a positive action we take inspires others and changes the world.

How often, upon hearing of another's distress or calamity or heartache, have we uttered an insincere, "Call me if I can help. Let me know what I can do." How much better if we took the time

to think through what is needed. A few hours of child sitting? A recommendation for a job? A meal ready to eat? Volunteering yard or house work? A drive to a doctor's office? An hour or two of just being available to listen?

The good news is that there are plenty of instances where people have "done more" to help others with their time, skills and dollars. We hear and read about them every day:

- The teenage girl who knits hats for preemie babies in the hospital.
- The woman who gives up a lucrative job to raise money to build drinking water wells in remote villages in Africa.
- The eight-year-old whose best friend has leukemia and shaved his head so his friend wouldn't feel different, regardless of suspension from school.
- The volunteers who spend tedious hours looking for a lost child or dog or helping disaster victims.
- The co-worker who gives up free time to make sure a drug-abusing colleague gets help.
- The neighbor who comes over one night a week to give an exhausted care giver respite.
- A father so inspired by his daughter's determination to give a book to a friend who has never owned a book before that he dedicates his life to giving books to elementary school-children.

Strangely, it is often the busiest people who find time to do more. Not surprisingly, they are often the happiest among us.

What a haunting feeling to have the certain knowledge that, "I could have done more...but I didn't."

And how gratifying to the soul to know deep down, "I did everything I could."

Six little words could make us each more content: Do all that you can do.

John Wesley, the English preacher and founder of the Methodist movement, said it a long time ago: "Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can."

“Have You Done Enough” is the latest in a series of “Little Red Books” published periodically for our clients and friends. We hope our readers find them relevant and of value. Previous titles have included:

- “The *Underappreciated Art* of Saying Thank You”
- “The Age of Apology”
- “Managing Uncertainty”
- “C.I.V.I.L.I.T.Y.”
- “The Lost Art of Listening”
- “Two Decades (1991-2011): The Words and the Deeds”
- “The Art of Disagreement”
- “Why Accountability Matters”

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