

The following is a short extract from my forthcoming book on negotiating, “Countermove”. It refers, specifically to one of the “Four Pillars of Success” and, once you’ve enjoyed this section, you can find, and enjoy, the other three in Chapter Four of my book.

Pillar One: Know Your Outcome

In everyday communication, just *thinking about your outcome*, even for a brief moment, will generally work for you. More often than not, people do not prepare themselves by reflecting on the outcome, or at least not in an effective way. We largely rely on our intuition and then we may get the results we want, despite the odds we face. But you cannot make that a habit, as the success that you get may, all too often, be coincidental. You managed to succeed that time, but it may not be so in your next endeavour. If you think beforehand about the communication that you are going into, you can most certainly improve your rate of success.

By thinking about the outcome, you can visualise it happening in the way you want it to turn out. You can then prepare yourself better, as you can see every step towards your goal unfurl. As that happens, you may find that the outcome you have visualised is not as appealing as you had imagined it to be. Instead you may see an alternate route materialise before you. Essentially you play out all the various options available to you for reaching your goal. You weigh every pro and con along the way and take intelligent decisions on how you want to reach your destination. Only when you make the effort of ‘seeing’ what the likely outcome is going to be, will you be able to make that decision. When you learn to make such intelligent decisions, you succeed faster.

Imagine that you are a student and part of the team that is going to campaign for this year’s ‘General Secretary’ elections to the University Council. Campaigning is going to be by word of mouth since billboards and/or publicity by all other means has been banned by the University.

The team has decided to meet to firm up the campaign strategy. All potential voters have been classified into groups such as senior male students, senior female students, junior and current year male students, junior and current year female students, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, etc. Your personal preference is for campaigning to the teaching staff, as it may also serve as leverage with them for rest of the year. If not the teaching staff, as a second alternative, you would prefer the junior and current year female students, perhaps with a good reason... But you go into the meeting unprepared, not having any argument to support your preference claim. Others in your group come up with specific reasons why they would like to campaign to their preferred group of voters. In the end you get lumped with having to campaign to the non-teaching staff, which was the last on your preference list.

So, why did this happen? You can’t say that you didn’t ask for it. Not only did you ask for it, but it was thrust upon you and this is because you were not prepared well enough to prevent it from happening. Your arguments were completely without basis, your objections were weak and moreover, you did not present a strong case, whereas others did.

Many a time, people go to a meeting not having thought about the outcome beforehand, and the events that unfold there take them completely by surprise. They become a mere bystander in the proceedings and then take on things that get thrown at them. Their physiology shows it and the others know it. Others quickly take advantage of the situation and walk away leaving them behind in confusion and ensuing despair.

They often fail to understand that had they taken the time and effort to visualise the proceedings, people would have reacted differently to each thing they said. *They would have been more in control.* Seems familiar? It certainly does to me, because I have been there myself in the past – but not anymore!

It takes only a few minutes to sit down and visualise a meeting, a get-together, a shopping binge, etc. If you do not take those few minutes to do it right, you can guess what the outcome will be - you leave it to the others to take charge of what happens to you. Do you really want to do that? Wouldn't you want to control your life the way you would like to live it?

Get into the habit of thinking for yourself. If you start doing that, very soon things will start happening to you the way you want, the way you have been visualising. You have to start by taking charge of yourself in all the little things that you do, so that eventually the big things in life will work out for you as well.

Then you cannot say "I don't know why this happened to me," or "Why does this always happen to me?" or "I knew I would mess things up". When you consistently take the time to visualise good things happening to you, or just visualise the picture of you coming out in top form, then, sooner or later, it HAS to happen. That is human psychology, and also the power of visualisation.

In order to become successful in life, start by knowing the outcome. Control your own life. Do not let others or the situation do it for you.