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John Lennon, Workers' Comp Myopia and The Power of Deciding

John Lennon wrote in his song "Beautiful Boy": "Life is what happens while you're busy making other plans." I remember these lyrics from years ago and found them to be quite profound. Today I find that this concept--"life can happen to us"--relates well to those that manage workers' comp programs.

Have you ever known anyone whose life seems to go like an empty canoe going down the rapids? Life tends to control them versus the other way around? This can lead to some pretty stressful living and can result in one becoming quite unhappy.

On the other end of the scale is the person that seems to direct their lives like a well-trained pilot, making it seem easy. They seem to be "happening to life" versus the random and unpredictable inverse of that. These people are usually successful in what they do and are much happier for it.



If "life happens" to a company too often then management is not effectively managing, and the organization's profits are thus affected accordingly. A test of good management is how well they control their areas of responsibility despite problems that inevitably present themselves.

You can do this simple exercise to feel the effects of "life happening to you" and then turn it around to "you happening to it." There is probably something on your desk that you have not done because you just haven't wanted to confront it yet. To the degree that it needs to be done and remains uncompleted, is to that degree is bearing some type of an effect upon you. This is a small example of "life happening to you." Ok, now **decide** to confront this task and then do it! In other words, "happen to it!"

The proof of you "happening to it" is that when you finish the task you will feel better.

The individuals who capably control their departments and attain desirable outcomes are the ones that are most valuable to the organization and thus are the ones that should be and often are paid the most money.

What attributes separate managers that, despite reasons to not succeed, achieve goals as planned versus the manager that gets sidetracked and daunted by "life's other plans"?

I know we could probably list several attributes that most effective managers possess, however, I believe there is one that trumps them all.

That attribute is their ability to DECIDE! Perhaps there is nothing more powerful than an unequivocal, pure, unfiltered decision. We have all heard of the car being lifted off the ground to save someone. We have heard of inexplicable victories over powerful enemies--1776 comes to mind; and the US Olympic Hockey Team collectively made an unequivocal decision at some point that they would beat the Russians on that remarkable day.

And I have witnessed in myself the final, absolute resolve to finally drop some pounds when I put on the last of my "fat pants" and shockingly even those had "shrunk in the wash". Decisions, when made with 100% commitment, are very powerful.

Without that firm, resolute, give-no-quarter, decision to accomplish something, doubts and reservations can creep in and like a tree root heaving open a sidewalk, can derail the best-laid plans.

Most great leaders have an uncanny ability to envision an outcome and to summon enough mental horsepower to know that their vision will in fact become a reality. This ability is the basis of everything great that has ever been accomplished. The ability to unequivocally decide on an outcome!

What does this have to do with workers' comp you ask? I say: EVERYTHING! Workers' comp in many aspects is a constant fight for control. It is not a battleground for the meek and faint hearted. If the workers' comp manager is the type that lets "life happen while you are busy making other plans," workers' comp costs become more bloated than passengers coming off a two week Caribbean cruise.

There is something else I have witnessed. Those companies with high workers' comp costs are those companies that simply have not truly **decided** that they *want* to control costs. Does that sound ridiculous? It is not! Put a bull's eye on workers' comp costs with 100% resolve and those costs will go down. If you are spending too much on workers' comp that decision has yet to be made.

One of our clients got fed up a few years ago. They were spending \$1.4 million on workers' comp. That is a lot of money that could be used much more profitably. That's what they thought too. Despite medical costs of claims rising over the last few years, we have helped them drop their workers' comp to under \$300,000 in 2009. That decision to control costs and to help protect the health of their employees is turning out to be worth millions of dollars over time going towards profit-making activities versus unnecessarily burning money in the workers' comp system.

This new economy is fixing the old malady of workers' comp myopia. You *can't* continue to have costly claims anymore. Forget it! Who can afford it? The new strategy is attacking claims more upstream, so they NEVER HAPPEN in the first place.

We have tremendous success working with companies who decide and commit to stopping back injuries and other sprain/strains. Once that decision is made, our job of getting employees to change their physical behavior at work and at home is a cinch.

You are only a decision away! Make it! Stop workers' comp costs at the source. "Stop tomorrow's injuries today"! Right now!

Check out our new blog at <http://backsafe.wordpress.com>. Sign up to get notifications when we add to it. We will be including guest contributors, handy tips, breaking ergonomic and training news. If you'd like to see some topic covered, please let us know. Thanks for your interest!

We look forward to helping you to "Prevent Tomorrow's Injuries Today," right now!

We're TWITTERing! Keep current on the latest in injury prevention by following us. Find "backsafe" at www.twitter.com/backsafe! Find us on Facebook too!

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Dennis Downing is the founder and President of Future Industrial Technologies, Inc., a nationwide Industrial Injury Prevention Training Company. It specializes in improving conditions at work and in life by utilizing the proprietary injury prevention programs, BACKSAFE® and SITTINGSAFE®, that have proven to be highly successful at reducing workers comp costs within companies of all sizes and descriptions.

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