

Initiate



Nothing happens until something moves. Einstein

My favorite word in the English language is *initiate* and its noun form, *initiative*.

Life favors those who take initiative.

Most people live passive lives; others are aggressive. Aggressive is better.

This may be the single most critical difference between leaders and followers. Leaders initiate; they are proactive. They have an agenda. I've even noticed that good leaders walk fast, literally; they know their destination and want to get there quickly.

Kirkpatrick and Locke agree: "Effective leaders are proactive. They make choices and take action that leads to change instead of just reacting to events or waiting for things to happen; that is, they show a high level of initiative. Instead of sitting idly by or waiting for fate to smile upon them, leaders need to challenge the process."

When teaching the Lead Well workshop, I ask delegates to consider the difference between a thermometer and a thermostat. A thermometer merely *reflects* the temperature of a room; a thermostat has the ability to *change* the temperature. Leaders are like thermostats; they visualize a better environment and take the initiative to make necessary changes.

Often, initiative must be paired with courage because you will inevitably pursue things that you have never done before, and that can be intimidating. Also, when others follow your initiatives, you'll sense a responsibility toward their effort and well-being, and that also takes courage.

Initiative is a bias-to-action; a frustration with passivity. It likes movement.

"I would not sit waiting for some vague tomorrow, nor for something to happen. One could wait a lifetime, and find nothing at the end of the waiting. I would begin here, I would make something happen." Louis L'Amour, *Sackett's Land Summary*

Summary

Think With Me - Reflections on life and leadership from Don McMinn

~~Thinking carefully about significant thoughts will change your life. Don McMinn can help facilitate that process.~~

What? - Initiative is good.

So what? - Initiative will give you an advantage in life; a lack of initiative will stymie your progress.

Now what? - Analyze your life in this area. Do you take initiative? If not, why not? Identify several projects you will start or goals you will pursue.

Leaders - It's important that leaders create an environment in which team members are encouraged to take initiative and are supported when they do, even when the initiative fails. Sanction inactivity, not failure. Micromanaging will stifle initiative; you must give good employees the freedom to make decisions and pursue plans.