

APPENDIX 9: MORE PIVOTAL MOMENTS

Included here are a few more pivotal stories in my life that didn't make the "meat" of the book but are nonetheless important and represent valuable life lessons and experiences.

CART BOY

At seventeen years old, I answered a job posting seeking a cart boy for a newly opened grocery store. I was offered the job and quickly discovered there were twelve cart boys hired to handle the store opening, with search lights shining in the air and many specials with free food or deeply discounted food to lure new shoppers. The store was an anchor property to a large shopping mall, where carts would be dispersed throughout. I quickly assessed that once the lights and freebies were removed, the need for twelve cart boys would be gone, and one or two would likely make the cut. Since the union pay was higher than anything else out there, I committed to being one of the "survivors." I made the effort into a game, always ensuring that I would get the store manager's attention with my hustle. That approach worked, and I became one of the two "survivors."

I decided that a consistency of such a work ethic would likely reap rewards, so I continued with my hustle, and whenever something needed to be done, I would be the volunteer. Mitch

Saffron was the relatively young store manager, and Mitch took notice. Eventually, he told me to pick my hours, as many as I wanted and whatever days I would like, since I would be doing more than any of the other two hundred employees at the store, whatever I was doing. This led to my being named assistant store manager in my late teens, thereby learning the business importance of hiring, firing, and leading people to improved performance. The store was one of the top-performing stores in the large chain, and I learned that the magic of Mitch was creating a culture of winners, bolstered by recognition and rewards. These were principles that would serve me well in my life by design.

CFO

In my early thirties, I held the position of CFO / SVP of administration for a national company. I reported to the CEO, a man named Jon Tilley. One day Tilley called me into his office and declared me to be his hardest-working direct report. Following this compliment, he then asked if I ever had given thought as to where I wanted to go in life. I laughed at his question and went on to share with him the story of my four categories of goals set at thirteen years old, one of which was to be the CEO of a national company in the money business. Now, here I was in just such a company; the only problem was he was in his early forties, and he had my job! We both laughed, and Jon went on to make a commitment for a succession plan, and one day soon, if necessary, he would leave the company and hand me the keys.

However, he noted I needed more experience in a few key areas. I suggested he transfer me over to those positions, and he declined, as he didn't want me out of my present role. I mentioned it would be impossible for me to learn the other roles, as mine was already a

full-time endeavor. Jon then proposed that I take two weeks additional vacation, with both weeks back to back. Further, those weeks were to be the last week of the month and the first week of the next month. This was a big ask, as the last week was when we closed the books and the first week was when financial statements were produced. Additionally, during those two weeks, I was forbidden to be in touch with my accounting team. Upon return, I would discover that the books were indeed closed and financials produced. For the next three months, I had to commit to staying away from the accounting area for those same two weeks and learn the areas in which I was weak.

I'm proud to report that the team stepped up and delivered the financials, and I was able to learn the areas where I was weakest. Not long after that, Jon knocked on my office door, threw the keys to the business to me, and headed off to Wall Street. Lessons learned were once again the importance of knowing what you want in life (intention/vision/goals) and the power of delegation and trusting others to perform.

ARTHUR ANDERSEN

When I graduated from university as an accounting major, I went to work for Arthur Andersen, known as a Big Eight accounting firm at the time. By then, I was not only married but also dad to our daughter, Melissa. While I was moving along quickly in the firm, my schedule was nearly 100 percent out-of-town travel. When I found the company unwilling to make changes so I could spend time with my family (while there were single employees with 100 percent nontraveling assignments), I decided to find another opportunity. I quickly snared a bigger-title position with a considerable increase in income while being able to be home each evening.

That sure sounded good; however, the commute was an hour each way, and the work could be done in 20 percent of the time. Within a year I elected to leave to more of an entrepreneurial opportunity, which led to a decade-long business journey. The lesson I learned here, which I have shared with many over the years, is whenever making career decisions, be sure you are “going to something that is in line with your passions, as opposed to leaving something.” I left Arthur Andersen to “leave” and did not do my due diligence that I was pursuing something I would be passionate about.

MASTERMIND GROUPS

One of the important contributors to my life by design is participating in mastermind groups. This is where regular gatherings of individuals share success stories, share challenges they are encountering, and overall come together to assist one another in their pursuits of well-lived lives. I've had the pleasure of such interactions in groups such as TEC/Vistage, YPO, EO, GOT, and several other smaller groups. The list of people who have positively impacted my life pursuits is too lengthy to list, but I encourage all to seek out such opportunities.