

Moving Forward, Looking Back

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I had an amazing experience the other morning driving to work. I try to get my daily exercise in before I go to work. Discipline-wise, that seems to work for me. The other morning I was heading from the gym to work, and surprise surprise, it was still dark outside. As I was driving to work, in my mind I was going through my calendar for the day and all I needed to accomplish. The trivial and mundane work you do to keep yourself on track for the day.

Then I saw it. I looked up and my eyes were instantly focused on my rear view mirror. There was the most remarkably beautiful sunrise illuminating the sky behind me. It was such a sight that I actually turned around to make sure my eyes were not playing a trick on me. They were not. Mornings are probably my favorite part of my day; new beginnings and fresh starts, like a blank canvas waiting to be painted upon! And before my eyes was this inspiring picture of a colorful sunrise.

And I began to think. So many times in leadership, we are focused and driven to be strategic in our outlook. Look toward the future and see what you can do to be the first to accomplish something original. Bolt forward and plan for future events and being proactive in how you handle challenges is a trademark of a good leader. There is somewhat of a quiet shame if you start to look behind you and where you have come from as a leader. We are instructed to keep focused on moving our units, schools, or organizations forward.

However...there should be more. Quiet and soulful reflection does a leader good.

There is much to be learned by our past actions. I can confidently state I have changed many behaviors of mine when in retrospect, those actions or behaviors were not effective or even unprofessional. The chance to correct a course of action because of previous experience is powerful. An opportunity to learn and share from those reflections is a great mentoring tool. Without looking and determining how and why we failed, we are bound to repeat some of those mistakes.

This future-focus drive has many positive attributes. The challenge is finding the balance and remembering there is more than the future which makes us great leaders. If we are so focused on the future, we miss the chance to critically evaluate our past actions. More importantly we never take a moment to justly celebrate victories. And today, every day, we need the chance to recognize the things we have accomplished, to



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trumpet the success of our teams, and to celebrate the smallest victories. Sometimes you need to look back so you can move forward. ■