

EXTINCTION WARNING: THE ART OF WAITING!

By: Robert J. Tamasy

Observing that today's business and professional world is fast-paced is as profound as declaring that a horse has four legs. So what else is new? But the pace of the work world, even over the past two decades, has accelerated at a rate that none of us could ever have imagined.

In the 1980s, overnight mail and facsimile machines dramatically speeded up communications. Instead of waiting days to receive important letters and contracts, we could send them to be received the next day – or even within minutes. Over the years that followed, the Internet, voice mail, electronic mail and text messaging made many uses for overnight mail and faxes obsolete. Communication became instantaneous. Why wait, we thought, when we can have what we need immediately?

These advances, in many ways, have provided great benefits. Few of us would wish to return to days when we had to exercise extreme patience anticipating the arrival of urgent documents, correspondence and other forms of communication to arrive. However, our increasingly "instant society" is rapidly depriving us of a unique life skill – the art of waiting.

Today it seems we must do everything in a hurry, even when we are not sure why. Everyone is busy, everyone is in a rush – therefore, we must do the same. But there is a certain virtue in waiting, something that we cannot achieve by attempting to compress time.

For example, fine wines are fermented over years. An exquisite meal cannot be produced in a microwave oven. Strong, stately trees do not grow overnight. A beautiful painting cannot be created within minutes with a few splashes of paint. And qualities we find in the best leaders and those we admire the most are not achieved in a matter of moments. Character – commitment to high, noble attributes and values of humankind – is forged over a lifetime. Perhaps this is why one of the world's oldest and most enduring books, the Bible, speaks so often about the necessity – and value – of waiting. Consider just a sampling of what it says on this topic:

Waiting patiently results in the expectation of success. In the work world we are action-oriented. "Do something, even if it's wrong!" seems our battle cry. Yet sometimes the best thing to do, particularly in times of crisis and uncertainty, is to wait, taking time to evaluate the proper course of action. "*Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him...those that hope in the Lord will inherit the land... Wait for the Lord and keep his way. He will exalt you to inherit the land...*" (Psalm 37:7, 9, 34).

Waiting provides time for problems to become resolved satisfactorily. When things go wrong, we often seek to take matters into our own hands and attempt to fix them. Often, however, adverse situations are outside of our control. At such times it is usually wise to wait for proper resolution. "*For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!*" (Isaiah 30:18).

Waiting helps us renew our energy and internal resources. Even when we feel tired, when every ounce of energy seems depleted, we often press on in the face of challenges. Sometimes taking the necessary time and recharge our internal batteries will enable us to proceed more productively and effectively. "*...But those that wait on the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint*" (Isaiah 40:31).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How do you typically react when you have to wait – whether in traffic, for a meal to be served, or in line at a bank or a store?
2. What, in your view, is the most difficult aspect of waiting?
3. If you were to learn to be more patient, more willing to wait and less prone to move into action at the slightest delay, what do you think would be the result?
4. The Bible verses cited speak about waiting on God. What is your reaction to these passages? What does it mean – to you – to wait on God?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to consider some other passages that concern this topic, turn to the following:

Genesis 49:18; Psalm 25:4-5, 62:1, 104:27-28, 145:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:58