



Inspiration Made Simple

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Inspiration is the most used and abused word in our daily existence. Whether it is business, politics, sports or any other endeavor of life, inspiration is considered to be the panacea that can transform personal lives and propel organizations to unbelievable heights.

No wonder, everyone (individuals and organizations alike) is constantly seeking this transformational wonder and are expending an enormous amount of money and time in this search. It has come to such a frenzy that a large number of experts have surfaced as inspirational gurus and are doing brisk commercial business by offering their expertise to inspire individuals and organizations. However, despite this obsession to master the art of inspiration, most

individuals and organizations do not achieve their desired goals and keep on guessing where they went wrong.

In my professional career of over 40 years transforming organizations in many countries around the globe, I universally observed that for most leaders there is a very cloudy view of what true inspiration is all about. When asked about true inspiration, their views revolve around sincerely wishing or genuinely wanting or ferociously pursuing a positive outcome. Rather than inspiring them, this view makes them confused and deprives them of the true opportunity to transform their sincere desires into positive outcomes.

True inspiration will only materialize if your mind has determined that the cause is the right one and worthy of your commitment, and your heart has genuinely felt that the cause is a good one and is worthy of your devotion. This synchronized embracing of the cause by both the mind and the heart is the only guarantee that true inspiration will surface and will lead to rewarding and enjoyable results. Both of these ingredients (Mindful Commitment and Heartfelt Devotion) are concurrently essential for true inspiration to manifest, and one is not the substitute for the other.

Let us explore the precise anatomies of mindful commitment and heartfelt devotion.

Mindful Commitment: The human mind is a miraculous machine capable of a colossal amount of calculating, categorizing, and reinforcing. And based upon our past experiences (good or bad), our values (learned governors), and the intensity of our aspirations, our mind determines whether to get committed to the cause or stay away from it. The higher the degree of its affinity to the cause, the more we believe it is beneficial for us and that we will be rewarded in some way by it, the higher level of commitment will be invoked by our mind. Our mind will guide us to embrace and display all three essential constituents of commitment, what I call **The Three Ds of Commitment: Desire (strong intentions), Determination (firm /fixed intentions) and Discipline (Systematic actions).**

In the absence of any one of these three, commitment is just a hollow word. The higher the level our mind takes to the cause (goal), believes it is in our self-interest and will improve our welfare, the higher the intensity of these three essential constituents of commitment. In other words, a mindful commitment leads to our total, not a tepid, commitment.

Mindful Commitment inflames our desire, boosts our determination and cements our discipline to achieve our desired goals.

Individuals and organizations who understand and embrace this precise anatomy of commitment, and implement policies and procedures to solidify the mindful commitment in its constituents, can achieve their goals and will prosper. In other words, mindful commitment is a sure bet to self-sufficiency and prosperity. Individuals and organization whose goal is only to achieve desired self-sufficiency can stop reading the balance of this manifesto and can embrace and implement only mindful commitments in its functioning.

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However, there is no guarantee that self-sufficiency achieved through mindful commitment alone will be lasting and enjoyable! The history of humankind is filled with countless examples of enviable but waning and joyless self-sufficiency achieved by multitudes of committed individuals and organizations. This brings us to the second essential element of true inspiration.

Heartfelt Devotion: Unlike our constantly calculating mind, which is focused on our welfare, our heart is intuitive and focuses on the bigger picture rather than ourselves. Mysteriously, it has a natural instinct or a sixth sense to feel if the sought cause (goal) is good for others. Prove to our heart that the sought cause will improve the welfare and happiness of others, and the intensity of our devotion to the cause increases with it. Our heart will then guide us to embrace and display all of the three essential ingredients, what I call **The Three Es of Devotion: Endearment, Enthusiasm, and Energy.**

These three ingredients are vital for heartfelt devotion to surface and shine. The more intense we feel these three essentials, the quicker we will authentic accept, attach ourselves to, and vigorously pursue the cause.

Heartfelt Devotion bonds us with the cause, ignites our enthusiasm and releases our inner vitality to make the cause beneficial for others.

Individuals and organization who embrace and display heartfelt devotion to a cause make other's lives better and also derive genuine happiness for themselves. The cause becomes a calling for them, and they surrender themselves to the cause even at the expense of themselves. However, with time, our heartfelt devotion and consequent happiness received from it can start to weaken if the needed resources to continue our calling become hard to come by. Selflessly driven indi-

viduals and non-profit organizations bonded with a noble cause to help others are prime examples of this struggle, as they continually worry about the source and continuity of economic and emotional resources to keep to their calling. In many cases this struggle leads to an increasing level of anxiety, which can undermine the very feeling of their genuine happiness.

So, we face a dichotomy! Should we focus on mindful commitment to achieve desired but fleeting self-sufficiency over time or embrace heartfelt devotion to experience genuine but waning happiness over time? The following two real life examples will provide us the clue to our predicament!

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Reviving the spirit of Chocolateville®

The venue of this true story is the city of Central Falls, Rhode Island, the characters a chocolatier and the executive director of a think tank. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Central Falls had been colloquially known as Chocolateville® for its innovation and entrepreneurial spirit as a chocolate manufacturer. As time wore on, the name Chocolateville® dissipated with the decline of the American manufacturing scene. Years of financial and social struggles led to making Central Falls the model of a failing American industrial city. Amidst the most recent financial crisis, in 2011, Central Falls became the only city in Rhode Island to declare bankruptcy.

Enter Mr. Mike Ritz into our discourse. This highly talented, energetic, and generous character leads Leadership Rhode Island (LRI) as its executive director. Leadership Rhode Island (LRI) is a nationally recognized community leadership development organization, founded in 1981. The mission of Leadership Rhode Island is to provide leaders and emerging leaders with knowledge and access to resources which will enable them to positively affect their enterprises and their communities. For the past 30 years, over 1800 leaders of Rhode Island from various walks of life (business, state, and social) have gone through this leadership development program and are using those learned skills and their newly developed networks to optimize their respective enterprises and communities.

From the very beginning of his assignment as an executive director in 2009, Mike (himself, an alumnus of LRI, class of 2007) had a strong feeling that the collective power of this pool of 1800+ trained leaders was greatly underutilized and their active participation and guidance was needed to help LRI become a stronger engine of visible, credible, and positive change for the inhabitants of the state. Consequently, Mike got the alumni pool involved and challenged them to explore an avenue that could become a rallying point for visible and credible change in the state.

With an almost unanimous majority, in 2011, the alumni pool identified the land of action—Central Falls—a bankrupt city of 19000 people living in little more than one square mile area with hopelessness and pessimism for their future. This urgent and grave situation was what Mike was looking for! His mind was quite convinced that this place could provide a unique opportunity for his organization to showcase its ability of orchestrating real positive change. And in his heart, he felt a strong affection for the people of the city who were struggling and hoping against hope for a better future. In other words, Mike found the perfect synergism of right (for his organization) and good (for the 19000 people of Central Falls). Armed with his mindful commitment and guided by his heartfelt devotion, Mike ventured into Central Falls with his 2012 class of 60 leaders.

In the process of meeting Central Falls residents, Mike stumbled into Chef Andrew Shotts, the owner and master chocolatier of Garrison Confections, who was considering closing his business and moving out of Central Falls. Prior to relocating to Central Falls in 2001, Andrew was a master

pastry chef at New York’s legendary Le Cote Basque restaurant and the Russian Tea Room and later became the corporate pastry chef of the Guittard chocolate company. In the fall of 2001, Andrew decided the time was right to launch his own line of artisanal chocolates, and this is how Garrison Confections, Inc. was born (Garrison is his middle name) in Central Falls.

Honing his skills over time, Andrew accumulated various honors; he was named one of the “Ten Best Pastry Chef in America” in 2000 and 2002 by USA Today. In April 2007, the Food Network named him the “Top chocolatier in the United States”. However, with quickly evaporating financial solvency and civic trust in the city, his business fell on hard times and started to struggle—with no hope of any meaningful recovery.

During their first encounter, both Mike and Andrew felt a mysterious affinity towards each other. What Mike saw in Andrew was a sincere person torn between the survival of his business and a deep affection for the people of his beloved city. On the other hand, listening to Mike about his genuine concern for the plight of the residents of Central Falls and his sincere desire of showcasing LRI capabilities to orchestrate positive change, Andrew saw a glimmer of hope for his business and his beloved city. The seeds of collaboration between two strangers looking for right and good were sown in their very first meeting, and it did not take long for this odd couple to create a combination of irresistible chocolate and positive social impact in the form of The Save Chocolateville® initiative.

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Under their plan, Andrew puts his heart and mind into creating irresistible chocolate bars with a Save Chocolateville® brand, and Mike passionately engulfed in marketing those chocolate bars through the power of his LRI and other networks (Many times, he dressed up as Willy Wonka, the legendary character from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and handed out the bars). Each chocolate bar is sold at \$5.50 a piece and all profits from the sales are earmarked for the children of Central Falls—for their education and other needs. Save Chocolateville® bars are currently sold in many diverse locations (Food Stores, AAA locations, Credit Unions, Public libraries) and are also available at [Buy with Heart](#), whose mission is to connect consumers to social enterprises. Publicity in the local and national media combined with accolades from the leaders of Rhode Island state government and various communities in and around Rhode Island have given unimaginable visibility and boost to Andrew’s business and have also provided a real shot in the arm for Mike’s LRI to flex its muscles to orchestrate additional changes in the state.

Not only has the Save Chocolateville® Initiative continually raised significant funds for children, but the storyboard wrapper of the chocolate bar is serving as a calling card for the community to take pride in its innovative past and work enthusiastically for a promising future.

This true, uplifting story highlights an authentic integration of mindful commitment and heartfelt devotion of two strangers and brings home the meaning of true inspiration. Mike and Andrew have found the perfect synergy of right (for their enterprises) and good (for people at large) and have been able to integrate their minds and hearts fully. Their mindful commitment and heartfelt devotion are giving true inspiration an authentic, practical face.

The 45 Year Thrill of Noodle Making

How can a person achieve rewarding, joyful, and lasting self-sufficiency for more than 45 years just making and selling noodles? Please play the five minute [For Udon and Country](#) video and let us try to figure out that secret.

If you watched this video, you can't help but be amazed how Shimizu San, a farmer in a small village near Tokyo Japan has skillfully integrated his mindful commitment and heartfelt devotion to achieve a rewarding, lasting and a joyful self-sufficiency. Through integration of his mindful commitment ("I needed to add value to wheat from my beloved land to survive") and his heartfelt

devotion (“If happiness spreads from what I am doing, I am happy”), he is not only living a fulfilling, thrilling, and meaningful life for himself for more than four decades, but is also making others’ lives more enjoyable. His mind has fully determined that adding value to his farmed wheat is the right thing to survive and preserve his beloved land, and his heart has genuinely felt that it is a good thing to keep on making and selling noodles from that wheat to spread happiness in others’ lives. This powerful synergy of right and good has provided the glue for Shimizu San to integrate his mind and heart fully for a lasting, rewarding, and thrilling self-sufficiency.

Similar to The Save Chocolateville® Bar, Shimizu San’s noodles have become that medium through which he has been able to integrate his mind and heart fully.

The answer to our predicament of choosing between mindful commitment and heartfelt devotion lies in the lives of people like Mike Ritz , Andrew Shotts and Shimizu San. What these three apostles of true inspiration shown us is that we do not have to choose between mindful commitment alone for a fleeting self- sufficiency or heartfelt devotion alone for waning happiness, but can and must integrate both of them to make us truly inspired to achieve a lasting and a joyful self-sufficiency.

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A Sixty Four Million Dollars Question

Having understood the precise anatomy of true inspiration and having seen its thrilling impact on the lives of people, the most critical question now before us is: What is the source of the glue that can truly integrate the minds and hearts of individuals and organizations and give true inspiration a practical face in their day to day functioning? This sixty four million dollar question is most often wrongly answered by most individuals and organizations. Mistakenly, they seek the source in sermons, pep talks, outside expertise, or an idea of fate. They frantically search for the source externally like a beggar unknowingly sitting on a box filled with gold. Looking inwardly, they can find that source in the very purpose of their existence. If the very purpose of an individual or an organization is meaningful (right for them as well as good for others), inspiration will reign supreme, otherwise it will be a wild goose chase. Individuals and organization who are serious about invoking true inspiration in themselves and others must make an earnest effort to seek and establish a meaningful purpose for them and their organizations.

A Meaningful Purpose is the only source to invoke both mindful commitment and heartfelt devotion concurrently.

Seeking a Meaningful Purpose

Consciously or sub-consciously, we all have a purpose and sincerely long to pursue it, but with its vague comprehension and with the reality of change dynamics, our pursuit becomes cloudy and unsteady. This results in alternating perceptions of our purpose and frequent changes in the course of our pursuit. Most individuals and organizations manifest a great amount of difficulty and anxiety in clearly expressing their purpose. Their expressions are full of ambiguity and are nothing more than a distorted view of their vision or mission or strategies. In the absence of this clarity, the miraculous power of the meaningful purpose to invoke true inspiration is undermined.

Seeking and establishing a meaningful purpose is not only beneficial; it is paramount. There is an enormous amount of help and insight available, if we are willing to explore.

Perhaps the most thought-provoking and outstanding insight I've found is provided by Nikos Mourkogiannis in his book *Purpose*. Combining Nikos's insights with my own personal and professional experiences, I would recommend keeping the following three essential facts at the forefront in seeking or establishing the meaningful purpose in an individual or an organization.

1. Meaningful purpose is always discovered, not borrowed.
2. Meaningful purpose is a creator, not an enabler.
3. Meaningful purpose is steadfast (enduring), not wavering.

Let me briefly elaborate on these three fundamental realities.

1. **Discovery:** Human beings and human entities (organizations) are quite diverse. Although our overall purpose in life or work is to accomplish, grow, and contribute, our pursuit is individualistic, and as such, we wish to reach the ultimate goal through different routes that bear our mark and our legacy. This is partly driven by our values (beliefs) and partly by our right as a human being or a human entity (organization), and that right is a choice. So our true purpose is shaped by our values and our choice. In light of this, we need to understand that determining our genuine meaningful purpose will require a close scrutiny of our values and fearless exercise of our choice. This is a discovery and not something we can copy, borrow, or steal.
2. **Creation:** “The purpose of this business is to make money.” “The purpose of my life is to be healthy, wealthy, and wise.” These two statements are quite common. On the surface, they look innocent, normal, and practical, but for the right comprehension of what meaningful purpose is all about, they are perhaps the worst distractions, the worst misconceptions, and the worst illusions. In both of these statements, the purpose is portrayed as an enabler or a means to achieve something like profit, health, or wisdom. The real insight is that the meaningful purpose has to be pursued for its own sake. It will improve profits, health, and wisdom, but is not a tool to improve them. The true meaningful purpose encompasses what is right and worthwhile, and by pursuing right and worthwhile, there will be joy and satisfaction manifested in improved

forms of health, wealth, and wisdom. This is a subtle but very important point, and as such, the true meaningful purpose should always be comprehended as a creator of endless joy and satisfaction for all and not as an enabler for narrow, selfish, and ulterior motives.

3. **Steadfastness:** A meaningful purpose does not crumble with the changing winds. It is an anchor and a rock of stability in trying times. In our personal and organizational lives, our tactics are frequently changed by adapting to the dynamics of the situational realities, our strategies are often refined to have congruence to the changing environments, our missions are periodically reviewed for their practicality, and our vision is sometimes questioned, but our meaningful purpose is never questioned. It is always refreshed and reinforced to draw inspiration for doing the right and the worthwhile. In other words, whereas tactics, strategies, missions, and visions have an ascending order of finite life, purpose is almost forever, or at least for decades or centuries. This means that for a meaningful purpose to be steadfast and enduring, it must have its roots in something that has been tested by time. Discovering those roots and establishing purpose with those time-tested roots is the only way to make purpose meaningful, enduring, and steadfast.

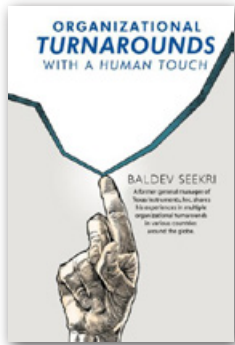
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So, our purpose (individual or organizational) must be subjected to the scrutiny of these three essentials of a meaningful purpose (discovery, creation, and steadfastness), and if it does not pass all of these three tests, the inspiration in our personal or organizational lives is nothing but an illusion.

In conclusion, inspiration can be a transformational wonder only if we are willing to comprehend its precise anatomy (an integrated blend of mindful commitment and heartfelt devotion) and honestly display it through seeking, establishing, and reinforcing a meaningful purpose (right for us as well as good for others). By doing so, true inspiration will manifest itself in its authentic form by making us totally committed (ambitious, determined and disciplined) and passionately devoted (enthusiastic, affectionate and vigorous) for the cause (goal) at hand. Individuals and organization can do themselves a great favor by doing a sanity check on their mission statements. If their mission statement lacks a clear portrayal of a meaningful purpose, all their efforts to inspire them and others will be nothing more than an exercise in futility.

Mindful Commitment gives us a sure shot to achieve the unimaginable, Heartfelt Devotion gives us the best thrill of our life, but, when both of them integrate with the power of a meaningful purpose, we are truly inspired and achieve a rewarding, a lasting and a blissful self-sufficiency. 📖

Info



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR | Baldev Seekri is a retired General Manager of Texas Instruments Inc. with over 40 years of management experience in many countries with diverse cultural philosophies, and is currently advising a prestigious think tank to turnaround critical situations.

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