

July, 2008
Volume 1, Issue 8

COLLABORATION HEALTH CARE

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Tribute to "The Last Lecture"

Randy Pausch died the other day. He was 47 years old.

For those of you not familiar with Randy's story, he was a Professor at Carnegie Mellon University who was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer last year and told he would have only a few more months of good health remaining. His condition was terminal. While not easy by any means, he made the conscious decision to face the situation with the same passion and commitment he demonstrated throughout his life. He faced his new reality with courage. He wanted to continue to experience life to the fullest even though he knew he didn't have much time left.

He would be leaving behind three small children who were too small to comprehend the reality of what was happening. He wanted to leave them the lessons he had learned during his short life so they could dream and experience life as he did- and enjoy life just as much. Randy Pausch delivered his "Last Lecture" as a tribute for his children. He wanted them to remember him. The lecture was taped while he gave it and broadcast via the internet (which we would highly recommend you watch- just search on "The Last Lecture" and you'll find the links) and became an immediate inspiration to millions. The content of the lecture also became a book of the same title (which we would also highly recommend you read) and became an instant bestseller.

We're taking a little break from all of our business and healthcare thoughts this month to focus on the real basics of what makes all of it worthwhile in the first place. Life strategy is equally as important as business strategy. If we live each day to the fullest and strive to always learn and experience new things we're going to grow and have an interesting story to tell when our time comes to deliver our own "last lecture".

Randy Pausch lived his life with passion, curiosity, and excitement- even when he knew the end was imminent. We're sure The Last Lecture will provide his children with some great lessons to apply to their lives as they grow. We think the rest of us can learn from some his lessons as well.

Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams

Every once in awhile a person comes along that just seems to put everything in the right perspective. We all move so fast in our lives today that it's easy to lose track of the really important things. It's easy to lose perspective of the things that really matter. Randy Pausch was one of those people who could help put life back into perspective.

Randy Pausch was a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon University who became a pioneer in the world of virtual reality technology. He was obviously a genius in his work but also seemed to take the time to really experience and appreciate life each day. In 2007, he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and told he had three to six months of good health remaining. Ultimately, the cancer would be terminal.

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Some Last Lecture Lessons For Life

Both the Last Lecture book and video are filled with lessons and inspirational thinking about how to approach your life. The lessons Randy Pausch left behind are lessons we can all learn from and apply to our own lives. Here's some more "Pauschisms" to consider for your own use for your career and your life:

"A lot of people want a shortcut. I find the best shortcut is the long way, which is basically two words- work hard."

"Everyone has to contribute to the common good. To not do so can be described in one word- selfish."

"Experience is what you get when you didn't get what you wanted."

"Look for the best in everybody."

"Don't obsess over what people think."

"I don't believe in no-win scenarios"- Note to Randy from William Shatner.

These are all pretty powerful thoughts and lessons. It's what you do with the thoughts and lessons that can really start to make a difference for yourself- and for others.

IssueSources: The Last Lecture, Randy Pausch with Jeffrey Zaslow; Hyperion Books; 2008

Childhood Dreams (con't)

For many years Carnegie Mellon University had a “Last Lecture Series”. In these lectures professors are asked “to offer reflections on their personal and professional journeys.” When Randy Pausch delivered his lecture, he knew he didn’t have many months of good health remaining. His last lecture was the real deal.

Randy viewed his lecture like he seemed to have viewed almost anything in his life. He viewed the lecture as an opportunity. While delivered to an academic audience, the messages contained were primarily designed to communicate with his children. He wanted to communicate to them the lessons he had learned about life in hopes they would also “really achieve your childhood dreams” (which became the title of his lecture).

The lessons he taught are valuable thoughts to consider for all of us- in our business and in our personal lives. They are thoughts that can make things a little easier when we’re confronted with the challenges and obstacles we face every day.

Randy believed, “The brick walls are there to stop people who don’t want it bad enough. They’re there to stop the *other* people.” Obstacles are a reality in life; always have been, always will be. But, if we want something bad enough we can figure out the right way to achieve our goals. It’s easy to hit the wall and walk away. We can all find the right excuses to rationalize the decision to quit. Randy believed in confronting the reality head-on, and finding ways to climb over the wall to success.

Randy was always fascinated with Star Trek and especially with Captain Kirk. He looked at Captain Kirk as the ultimate manager, “he knew how to delegate, had the passion to inspire, and looked good in what he wore to work. He never professed to have skills greater than his subordinates. He acknowledged that they knew what they were doing in their domains. But, he established the vision, the tone.” Randy could see the leadership qualities that are necessary to lead in a character he admired and dreamed of being. He exhibited the same qualities in his own work and in how he lived.

His lecture talked about the way he lived his life as an optimist. He was always a dreamer and always looking for the good in anything. Deciding on whether to be an optimist or victim is a choice we all have to make. It’s easy to become a “victim” in the world today and it’s easy to complain about all of the things that are wrong. But, Randy believed that “complaining does not work as a strategy. We all have finite time and energy. Any time we spend whining is unlikely to help us achieve our goals, and it won’t make us happier.” He also acknowledged that “no matter how bad things are, you can always make them worse. At the same time, it is often in your power to make them better.” The decision is up to you.

It would have been quite easy for Randy to design his

lecture about the emotions of confronting the reality of death. But, instead he designed it to emphasize the importance of life and living it each day because “time is all you have... and you may find one day that you have less than you think.” He stressed the importance of character, humility, and integrity in achieving your dreams.

When asked by a colleague what he wanted written on his tombstone he replied; “Randy Pausch, He Lived Thirty Years After A Terminal Diagnosis”. He was thinking optimistically even when he knew the odds were against him.

Randy Pausch died on July 25, 2008.

As we pursue our own dreams and goals and deal with the realities of everyday life, let’s take a few minutes periodically to appreciate the things that are really important. As Randy said in the closing of his Last Lecture, “It’s not about how to achieve your dreams. It’s about how to lead your life. If you lead your life the right way, the karma will take care of itself. The dreams will come to you.”

Randy’s Last Lecture has become an inspirational message to millions and the legacy he is leaving behind is a tribute to how he lived his life and how he confronted the reality of death.

Let’s hope our own “Last Lecture” will be as inspiring to others as Randy’s was to us.

Think About It:

“Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.”

Seneca; Roman Philosopher

“Whether you think you can or can’t, you’re right.”

Randy Pausch

“The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago. The second best time is today.”

Chinese Proverb