

What Now? Visualize the Future

If you've ever played competitive sports (or watched a practice session of someone who has), you've probably heard this before. Coaches are big on visualization. They often implore their athletes to, for instance, envision all the steps they will take doing a gymnastics routine while they wait for their turn on the practice mat. Or to visualize in detail the precise steps to complete a layup and dunk, without the ball or basket. Coaches constantly remind players to imagine the perfect kick, see the completed pass in their mind, envision the flawless form of their breast stroke, whatever it may be, and to utilize their time off the court, field or out of water to do so. This seems a little fluffy (something most coaches probably aren't too often accused of being), but why then is it such a common practice? Because creating a precise mental map of how to get something done in the physical world has been proven to help a person get that thing done in the physical world. Visualizing a skill or physical activity—such as sports—actually helps you perform the skill or activity better.

But visualization isn't just for sports—in fact it has a myriad applications. According to Jenna McNaney in her HuffPost article entitled [5 Benefits We Can Reap From the Power of Visualization Immediately](#), “Mental imagery has been a skill that has helped several influential people such as Oprah, Bill Gates, Jack Nicklaus, and Jim Carry achieve success.”* In his Science Abbey article, [Power of the Mind 1: The Science of Visualization](#), author D.B. Smith points out, “There is a lot of research that shows how mental practice boosts confidence, enhances mood, helps the healing process and has a positive effect on performance of cognitive and physical tasks.”** You can learn more about why this is so and how the brain works in this fascinating Psychology Today article [Brain Basics, Part One: The Power of Visualization](#).*** But even without all the scientific exposition, most of us intuitively know what Oprah means when she simplifies it this way, “If you can see it and believe it, it's a lot easier to achieve it...”*

So what does all this have to do with us?

Here's our reality: this week and in coming weeks, parts of the country are emerging from their quarantine and social distancing restrictions. Whether you think it's too soon or long overdue, the fact remains our country is coming back to life and groping toward the normal we all took for granted a mere handful of months ago. As we push through our collective cocoon and start getting back to business as usual, one has to wonder... will it really be business as usual? It's probably safe to assume the new normal won't be an exact replica of what it was in December or early January, before most humans had ever heard of a thing called COVID-19. But what will it be? Or perhaps a better question, what SHOULD it be? ENTER: visualization.

We strongly believe it's not too soon to start creating a mental picture for you and your team, colleagues, partners, etc. of what your particular “new normal” will look like. In fact, we invite you to include those you work closely with to help you create that vision together. Visualization. At work even! We're not suggesting that you lead a group meditation (although—full disclosure—we wouldn't discourage it either). What we are suggesting doesn't require a Tibetan mountaintop or holding the Lotus position. But it does require a conversation. And to help you get started, we've included some provocative questions that you can ask in your staff meetings to gen up some good thinking and discussion about what your world would and should look like in a post-pandemic era.

Here are some conversation-starter questions:

- What have I learned about myself through this experience that I will want to take with me as I move forward?
- What have we learned about how we work, communicate and relate to each other as a team that will be important to remember and carry forward?
- What was the worst thing about this experience?
- What one or two unexpected benefits came out of this experience that I want to remember and put to work?
- What temporary changes, adaptations or adjustments have we made that should remain permanent?
- What's one meaningful positive shift/outcome/result you've noticed?
- What did you take on or try with your team? How did it go? What did you learn?
- What support were you able to provide? How can you keep that support going?
- What is our mission critical work right now? Will that change? Why?
- How do we want to be remembered for what we did during the quarantine?
- What is something we can do for our clients/customers?
- What has brought you joy? How can you continue?
- What gets you excited about the future?

Don't limit yourself to these, you and your team can certainly come up with more, and perhaps better, questions. But either way, we encourage you to start thinking about the future. Have people start mulling these topics over too, and invite them to come to your next meeting prepared to discuss and share ideas. You may very well be amazed at what you can create together.

Have a great week. If you need ideas, communications, tools or other support, Jenn and Ron are here to help you.

Want to read more?

* https://www.huffpost.com/entry/5-benefits-we-can-reap-fr_b_6672638

** <https://www.scienceabbey.com/2018/10/24/power-of-the-mind-the-science-of-visualization-1/>

*** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/gifted-ed-guru/201211/brain-basics-part-one-the-power-visualization>