

Can you handle your own truth? Better get used to it.

Remember the last time you stared into one of those bathroom magnifying mirrors? Or asked your personal trainer what specific areas you needed to work on? You may have noticed, amid your squirming, that considerable discomfort is attendant to submitting to scrutiny.

It's a discomfort universal to your personal and professional life — and one necessary to both.

The observations of others are likely to evoke both resistance and resentment, and neutralizing these will require commitment, courage, and a willingness to subordinate “comfort” to the pain of meaningful, substantive growth.

But comfort cannot be the yardstick by which we measure success, personally or organizationally. “Comfort” simply isn't how we as professionals get to the top of our game; and it's not how we lead our organizations to peak performance.

Indeed, the more we mature the more we realize that it is the very antithesis of comfort that produces success.

If you decide to make scrutiny a more robust part of your life, you'll need to choose which of the three levels of intensity is right for you at this point in your life. In order of least to most intense, they are: (1) large groups where your presence or absence wouldn't necessarily be noticed

and where verbal participation isn't required; (2) small groups where both your presence and participation are required; and (3) one-on-one arrangements where you invite a specific individual to hold you accountable for a specific outcome.

Next, assess your level of resistance by determining which of the following four truths about scrutiny makes you most anxious. This will help you develop the requisite intellectual and emotional endurance for the growing pains to come.

■ Truth 1: The more you need scrutiny, the less receptive to it you'll be. Being put under a microscope is tough, particularly if you already know your performance to date has been less than optimal. Although we can all avoid scrutiny for a while, ultimately it'll become inevitable, at which point it's likely to be exponentially more painful.

■ Truth 2: The more successful you become, the less you feel you need scrutiny. Shift your focus away from how good you are at the moment and on to “How good you could be?” Don't allow yourself to get so cocky that you no longer vet your behaviors and your results through the lens of the old axiom: “Tomorrow isn't guaranteed.” Are you prepared to second-guess yourself?

■ Truth 3: The more you resist scrutiny, the more at risk you become. Scrutiny

reveals boundaries; clarifies expectations; and identifies the parameters within which we need to function to be successful in a given endeavor. Scrutiny identifies the thresholds beyond which our risks increase. In application, scrutiny functions as a fence does for a beloved pet. You can choose to dig under or jump over your “scrutiny fences,” but you'll do so with greater awareness of the risk of becoming road kill! Are you willing to establish boundaries?

■ Truth 4: Implicit in the imposition of scrutiny is the expectation of change. Scrutiny reveals what isn't that should be, and what is that shouldn't be. Scrutiny illuminates that which is out of alignment, and demands action to re-establish alignment.

Are you ready to act?

An openness to scrutiny, better yet, a welcoming of it, along with a willingness to change, despite the attendant discomforts, affords a state of being that few organizations and even fewer individuals enjoy: the state of alignment.

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