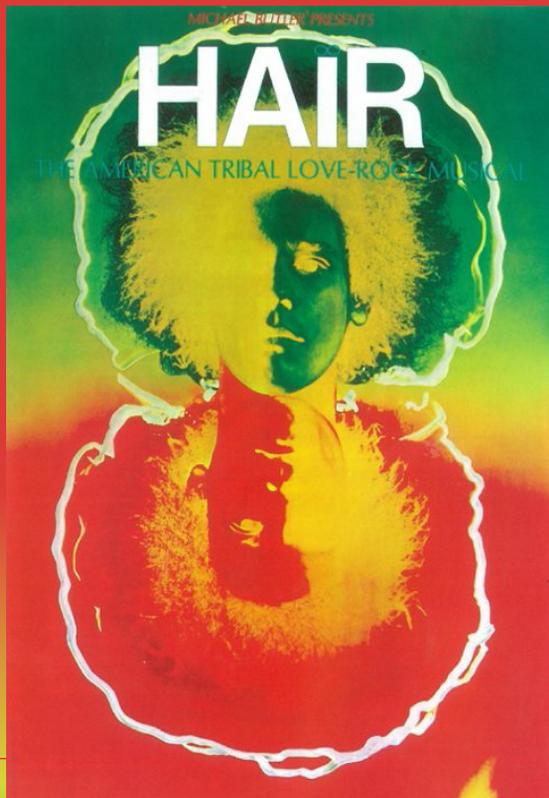


THE UN-COMFORT ZONE

With Robert Wilson

The Reward is in the Eye of the Beholder



In the early 1970s I was a young teenager who was completely caught up in the *Zeitgeist*. I admired the long-haired rebels and radicals who were engaged in protesting the establishment and developing the counter-culture. I didn't really know what any of that meant, but to me it was all about empowering youth and declaring our independence from the adults. My parents in particular.

As with any normal teenager, I was trying to grow up as fast as I could. And, because it annoyed my parents, wearing my hair long was its perfect expression. That, and it was *de rigueur* among all the teenagers who wanted to be cool. So, the longer the better – or in the immortal words from the title song to the 1968 Broadway Musical *HAIR*, "Oh, say can you see, My eyes if you can... Then my hair's too short!"

It drove my parents completely crazy. They could not understand why any male would want to wear long hair. We fought about it all the time.

Meanwhile, I was in my first year of high school and the transition to a new school was causing my grades to drop dramatically. My parents saw an advantage, and the law was laid down: keep my grades above a certain minimum or cut my hair. It worked. I brought home a dismal report card, and it was off to the barber shop. Not surprisingly, my next report card met the minimum.

The formula is simple: if you can find

out what is valuable to someone, then you have the key to motivating them. For me, at age 13, the length of my hair became the coin of the realm.

A year later, I accidentally made the Honor Roll. I say it was an accident because I was only trying to meet the minimum grades required by my parents and I somehow exceeded that. When I received the engraved certificate with the embossed gold seal, I was surprised by the feeling it gave me. I felt important – especially when my teachers praised me. I liked that feeling, and I wanted to experience it again. Suddenly the coin of the realm changed, and it was no longer the length of my hair that was motivating me. It was high grades and the sense of pride they gave me. Oh, my hair continued to grow, but my grades were all about achievement. From that point forward until I graduated, I never failed to make the Honor Roll.

Find out what is valuable to the person you want to motivate. What hobbies do they have? What are they passionate about?

How do they spend their spare time? Then when you learn what rocks their world, find a way to tie your goals to it.

If you're not sure what is valuable to someone, you can always make them feel important with an award or some other public acknowledgment. Everyone likes to hear their name announced in recognition at company or association meetings. Everyone likes to read their name in print in the organizational newsletter or website. Many business newspapers have a section where you can post your employees promotions and accomplishments. These low-cost to no-cost incentives truly have the power to motivate.

Robert Evans Wilson, Jr. is an author, speaker and humorist. He works with companies that want to be more competitive and with people who want to think like innovators. For more information on Robert, please visit www.jumpstartyourmeeting.com.