

THE UN-COMFORT ZONE

With Robert Wilson

IF YOU BELIEVE... DON'T HOLD BACK! BELIEF IS THE ONE COMPONENT YOU NEED TO SUCCEED

I sat astride my banana seat bike in a parking lot and stared down a thirty foot strip of pavement. It was six inches wide and lined with rubber balls. I was nine years old and participating in a bicycle rodeo. The objective was to ride the entire length without hitting a single ball. The slightest bump would send them rolling.

Nearly a hundred kids had entered, and so far no one had done this event perfectly. Each contestant got three tries. The best hit only five balls, most hit dozens. I didn't see the difficulty. It looked easy, and as it turned out, for me, it was. I did it on my first attempt. No one else was able to do it - even with three tries. I was able to do it for the simple reason that I believed I could.

Decades later, riding my mountain bike, I attempted to ride a 20 foot length of six-inch board that was elevated 12 inches off the ground. I was lucky if I could complete the length one try in twenty. That measly 12 inches of doubt shattered my belief system. As Henry Ford said, "If you think you can or you think you can't, you're right."

We've seen sports stars whose belief system took them to the top of their game: Michael Jordan swooshing the net for a lifetime average of 30 points per game; Tiger Woods routinely sinking impossibly long putts of 50 feet or more; and Babe Ruth pointing to the outfield fence where he would hit a home run. What is their secret? Other than the thousands of hours of practice, which many lesser players also have, each of these men visualized what they wanted to achieve then allowed themselves to do it. Their belief put them "in the zone." When our belief is strong enough, we will succeed. Or as Buddha put it, "We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With

our thoughts, we make the world."

Is there something you believe you can do, but you've never tried? Many years ago I was president of my neighborhood association. Each month I had to give a brief speech that amounted to little more than giving announcements. Nevertheless, it made me extremely nervous and I clung to the lectern in a white-knuckle grip as I read my notes out loud.

During that time, I participated as a counselor to a group of teenagers attending a Hugh O'Brian Youth Foundation leadership seminar. The Saturday night dinner keynote speaker was entertaining and informative; she was also relaxed and clearly having fun. I remember thinking to myself, "I can do that. I want to do that!" In those two succinct sentences I made a belief statement and a desire statement, both of which are necessary for success.

I genuinely believed that I could speak professionally because I had told many a good story across a dinner table, but at the same time I remembered how I felt speaking to the neighborhood association with a stomach full of butterflies. To combat those feelings I joined a Toastmasters club and learned what I didn't know about public speaking.

It took me a year before I could break free of the lectern and my notes. Two years after that I started speaking professionally. I gave presentations on advertising which is the industry I've worked in most of my life, but

more than anything I wanted to speak on innovation and creativity.

During my first year or two of speaking, I met a nationally known professional speaker. He asked me what topic I spoke on and I replied, "Creativity." He scoffed at that and said, "There's hundreds of guys speaking on that - you need to find your own niche." On that advice I developed some additional topics, but soon found that the presentation which led to the most recommendations was the one on creativity. What was the difference? It is a subject that I am passionate about. Creative thinking has improved my life time and time again, and it is my belief that it will help others. When I speak on it, I am in the zone.

Is there a business you believe you would be successful in? You would not be dreaming about it - seeing yourself doing it - if you didn't believe you could! Michael Jordan didn't become a basketball star without developing the skills he needed first. He took as many as 2000 practice shots a day to imprint those skills into his mental and physical circuitry. Perhaps all you need is practice.

If there is something you want to do, but haven't tried, then break it down. What parts of the business do you believe you can do? What parts do you believe you can't do? Do the parts you can do outweigh the ones you can't? If yes, then you're off to a good start, and the odds are in your favor. But if the opposite is true, don't let that stop

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you. Belief must be supported by desire. If your desire is strong enough, you will gain the skills and subsequently the self-belief you need to succeed.

Once you've identified the parts you can't do, ask yourself, "Can I learn to do them?" If not, hire someone else who can. Perhaps you don't even know which parts you don't know. That's OK; hire a consultant, or talk with someone who has already succeeded at this or a similar business. Delegating what you can't do, frees up your belief system and enables you to focus on what you can.

When you believe you can do something - you don't really think about it - you just do it. It's the thinking about it that sometimes holds you back. According to David Eagleman, in his book *Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain*, if you're getting trounced in tennis, ask your opponent how they are able to serve so well. He says that will cause them to start thinking about how it is done to the point that they won't be able to do it anymore. Are you over-thinking your desire?

In my research of creative thinkers and

innovators, the one trait I found that was nearly universal among them was the belief that they will succeed. They believe they will be able to create whatever it is they have set out to create. They believe they will be able to solve the problem they are facing. Thomas Edison may have expressed it best, "I have not failed 700 times. I have not failed once. I have succeeded in proving that those 700 ways will not work. When I have eliminated the ways that will not work, I will find the way that will work."

What are you waiting for - if you believe you'll succeed - you will. Go for it!

Robert Evans Wilson, Jr. is an author, humorist and innovation consultant. He works with companies that want to be more competitive and with people who want to think like innovators. Robert is also the author of the humorous children's book: *The Annoying Ghost Kid*. For more information on Robert, please visit www.jumpstartyourmeeting.com