

ESCAPE FROM EDEN

ARE YOU A SUCCULENT ELOI RIPENING FOR A MORLOCK FEAST?

Last weekend, as I was clearing clutter, I found a copy of H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine*. As I thumbed through it, I recalled that Wells, in his future world, describes man's descendants as evolving into two distinct species: the Eloi and the Morlock. The Eloi live in a Garden of Eden like setting where their food and clothing are provided for them by the Morlock. The catch is that the Morlock harvest and eat the Eloi at night. These creatures are Wells' metaphor for the division of English society. I see them as metaphors for the concepts of motivation.

If you're living in the Garden of Eden, you have no motivation to till the soil. When you can reach and take what you need, you are not going to become more productive, fit, thin, smart, or anything. You're a happy, content, couch potato.

Motivation is all about how uncomfortable you are. The phrase: "get out of your comfort zone," is so overused that it has lost its power. And, yet... it still holds an incredible gem of truth.

People tend to repeat behavior which bring them rewards, and avoid behavior which bring punishment. As small children, we went to school where we learned to avoid making mistakes because of either teacher disapproval or classmate ridicule. Through our fear of these, we created the boundaries of our comfort zone. Today many adults simply prefer to avoid making mistakes by not stepping up or volunteering. They have learned it is safer to not expose themselves to the possibility of being wrong.

Then there are Gainers and Maintainers. Some people are motivated by *gain*, that is: having more. Personal gain is important to them, and they will try harder, take risks, and

work longer to reap rewards, pleasure, and approval. They willingly abandon their comfort zone to accept challenges, which they see as opportunities, because to them not having enough is even more uncomfortable.

On the other hand, there are those who are more concerned with *maintaining* what they have. These people are not risk-takers; and avoid leaving their comfort zone. They will fight change even to the detriment of their long-term comfort (see the failure of Kodak for example). However, some simply prefer a more balanced life; and don't feel the need to acquire more.

All behavior has a motive behind it. Motivation is the process of solving problems or satisfying needs (finding a sense of well-being or homeostasis). A satisfied need is not a motivator. If you are comfortable, you don't move. But when you are uncomfortable - or if there is a threat to your comfort - you'll move.

An unsatisfied need causes tension. The difference between 'what I have' and 'what I want' is a problem. The contrast between 'what we want' and 'what we have' is what motivates us. The contrast is the problem. The more the contrast, the stronger the motivation.

For people in sales, the business of selling is essentially helping people satisfy needs. A good salesperson makes it clear to the prospect how unpleasant his present situation is; and makes him anticipate the enjoyment he will have when he buys what is offered. Alternatively, if the prospect's situation is adequate, the good salesperson will still show him how much better, or easier it could be if he took advantage of the product or service being offered.

If you want to motivate someone (including yourself), you are going to have

to remove them from their comfort zone; in other words, you've going to have to make them uncomfortable. When someone is uncomfortable, they work to get back to their comfort zone. As an employer or other leader, if you guide them with knowledge and training, you can maneuver them where you want. However, if you just make them uncomfortable (for example: you order them to sell more widgets or get fired, without first providing proper training to them), then you have removed an important element of control from the equation. And, you could lose a valuable employee rather than improve him. If you try this with someone close to you, you might lose a friend or even end up divorced.

Remaining content, maintaining the status quo, and staying in your comfort zone can be costly. If you aren't questioning things, and looking beyond your normal boundaries, you may be missing opportunities... or worse. You may find one day that you're an Eloi who is being harvested by Morlock.

Robert Evans Wilson, Jr. is an author, humorist/speaker and innovation consultant. He works with companies that want to be more competitive and with people who want to think like innovators. Robert is the author of *...and Never Coming Back*, a psychological thriller-novel about a motion picture director; *The Annoying Ghost Kid*, a humorous children's book about dealing with a bully; and the inspirational book: *Wisdom in the Weirdest Places*. For more information on Robert, please visit www.jumpstartyourmeeting.com.