

How to Get Unstuck—Now!

by: John P. Foppe

My mentor, Zig Ziglar, has long proclaimed the principle, “You have to *be* before you can *do*, and *do* before you can *have*.” Some might dismiss this belief as a platitude, but the longer I live without arms and work with organizations, the more I see how prophetic Zig’s words are.

Now, more than ever in today’s fast changing world where businesses are forced to do more with less, this standard explains why people get stuck. More importantly, it holds the key to making things happen.

In order to fully grasp the wisdom of this principle, one must first see how the world has it backwards. In business, people often think they need to *have* more time, money, technology, personnel, etc. in order to *do* a task. Once they *do* the task successfully, they believe they’ll *be* something important like a leader in industry.

Unfortunately, this perspective is a non-starter. When people think they must *have* something to execute an initiative, they will never *have* enough. Moreover, if an individual thinks others must change before his situation can improve, he’s likely to be disappointed. Ultimately, when he believes he doesn’t *have* enough, his excuse is born—little will get done.

At one time, I approached life this way. Not having arms gave me a great excuse. Consequently, I had a miserable, dependent, and limited existence.

Today, I live a full life. How?

I understand the power of “being”. I live the principle forwardly. “You have to *be* before you can *do*, and *do* before you can *have*.” Some don’t understand this principle because they have never seen a solid example of *being*.

Here’s an example from my life. About ten years ago, I wanted to write a book—a daunting task. I wrote a page here and there, but some obstacle always seemed to get in my way. Since I was traveling all over, I rationalized that I didn’t have blocks of time to sit and write. In addition, traveling without arms and carrying a laptop was cumbersome. Consequently, years passed and I only had scattered thoughts on paper. Not having time or the ability to carry a laptop, I excused my lack of progress. I was stuck.

Getting unstuck involved more than wanting to have a book; I had to want to *be* a writer. Essentially, what do writers *do*?

Writers write!

Not having time or the ability to carry a laptop is inconsequential because a writer figures out how to deal with these limitations.

When I chose to be writer, writing became my priority, and nothing stopped me. My excuses vanished. I found time to write while waiting for a delayed flight. Instead of using a computer, I simply wrote with pen and paper. After all, what do writers do? Writers write!

Choosing to be a writer, I made writing a way of life. I wrote on trains, in doctors’ waiting rooms, and in hotel rooms. Eventually, I wrote an entire manuscript. I



submitted the manuscript to ten publishers. All ten of them rejected it. Even these rejections didn't stop me because I was *being* a writer. If I claimed to be a writer, but stopped writing, I would be a hypocrite. So, what do writers do?

I wrote an 11th proposal. This time Thomas Nelson Publishers agreed to publish my book! *What's Your Excuse? Making the Most of What You Have* was published in 2002!

Now, I *have*. What I have is the privilege to say the book has been translated into five foreign languages. I have the honor to say St. Louis University selected my book as required freshmen reading in 2004. And, I even have royalty checks!

A skeptical executive once asked me, "Isn't this principle just semantics for persistence and commitment?"

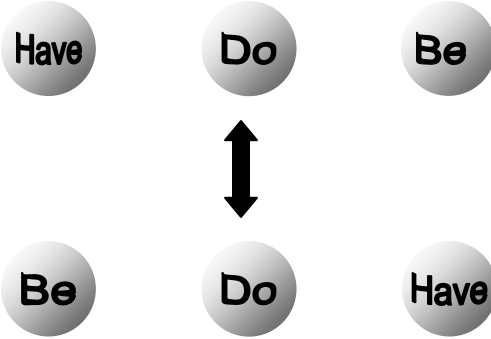
"No," I replied.

When one starts from the position of *having*, however, he must laboriously dig and search for resources and assets. He needs persistence and commitment to stay motivated. Where does he get it from? He's accustomed to looking outside of himself for help. Now, he's right back where he started—needing to *have* something. When one chooses to *be*, however, the choice doesn't cost any money or take any time. Persistence and commitment naturally flow from the internal sources of one's passion and integrity.

Indeed, one must work hard. I pointed out to the executive, in this principle, *doing* is still central. I still had to do the writing.

Fundamentally, *being* digs down to your identity—living your aspiration with your whole heart, mind, body, and spirit.

Who are you choosing to *be*?



John Foppe advises, speaks and writes about how to maintain momentum when executing initiatives. For information, go to www.visionaryvelocity.com.

