

Is Fear of Delivery holding you back?

By Lee Meadows
 Guest Columnist

It is the hope of anyone who stands next to a podium in a classroom setting and pontificates about a subject area that the most illuminating of insights will result from the most in-depth of discussions. While that does happen from time to time, of late it seems that several of those discussions have taken place outside of the traditional classroom and in places where I least expect a discussion to occur.

One of my favorite philosophers, Socrates, believed that the world was a living classroom. So, by this reasoning, the Panera Bread, located on Grand River and Novi Road, is a living classroom. Hard to dispute the claims of a philosopher who roamed the great city asking questions wearing only one shoe!

I was enjoying a bowl of tomato soup and a baguette when a young man approached me and said, "Dr. Lee Meadows?" I flashed my humblest of smiles and said, "Yes, how kind of you to recognize me."

"It's easy since you're wearing your Walsh College nametag." In that moment, I realized, much like Socrates, these are the flaws that keep us from being taken seriously. He sat down and asked, "May I join you?"

I nodded, just to give the appearance of control, and before I could ask if

there was something on his mind, he said, "There's something on my mind, and so I'd like to ask you a question." I dipped my baguette in my soup and motioned for him to proceed.



Lee Meadows

He went on to explain that he worked for a local engineering company and

that after several years on the job, his career had stalled and he was concerned about his future.

"It is an understandable concern," I replied, "So, why do you think it has stalled?"

He said that his last few projects have gone dead in the water and, as a result, he has not been asked to lead some of the current projects, and his name has not been mentioned for possible future projects. He was genuinely worried.

I asked him a series of questions that were primarily designed to help him think through the organizational, professional and personal issues that might be hindering his ability to complete the projects. After the blame bounced from the organization to his psychotic boss (his words, not mine), the incompetent team members, the emotionally traumatized administrative assistant, the outsourced maintenance crew, his twice-paroled brother-in-

law and his wife's promiscuous cat, we were able to, finally, narrow it down to a simple nugget of truth.

I sopped the last drop of soup, raised a Spock eyebrow and said, "Young man, you are suffering from a severe case of F.O.D. — also known as Fear of Delivery."

"What is that?" he asked.

"It is a malingering virus that invades the reasoning part of your brain and deludes you into becoming enamored with the process of doing something and never its completion. You like the idea of talking about doing something and all of its surrounding issues, but you don't want to finish."

"Why would I do something like that?" he asked.

"Simple: What gets finished gets measured. Oftentimes, how that completed project gets measured is what creates the fear."

He pondered the statement and said, "So, I don't complete a project because I'm afraid it will be measured as a failure?"

"The success or failure measure is not the issue. Neither is relevant since the positive reinforcement, for you, comes from the adulation and attention you generate when you are in the process of completing a project. Thus, your Fear of Delivery has contributed to your career being stalled."

"Well, other than getting a job with FedEx, what can I do about it?" he asked.

"Start small," I said.



“Go from a ‘To Do’ list to a ‘Get it Done Now!’ list. Don’t worry about how it gets measured; focus on the quality of your work.”

I stood up from the table, touched his shoulder and quoted a line from one of my favorite movies. “You have the strength that comes from knowing.”

It would have been a powerful and profound ending if I hadn’t left a shoe.

Lee E. Meadows, Ph.D is a professor of management at Walsh College working at the Novi Campus. He can be contacted at lmeadows@walshcollege.edu.