Teamwork

I had the great opportunity a few months ago to see the effects of teamwork, up close and personal.

You've no doubt grown tired of hearing about my trips this summer -- but one story remains to be told -- the story of the mighty Colorado.

We started our trip in Las Vegas. Driving through the desert Southwest of North America, we first stopped at the Grand Canyon. Carved by the mighty Colorado river, the Grand Canyon is one of the great wonders of this world. The Colorado twists and turns through its depths. Even in drought years like this one, the river creates great rapids and carves the Grand even deeper.

From the Grand, we went to Arizona. We passed over the Colorado below Lake Powell. The Colorado here is wide, fast, and intense. The bridge that spans it is wide and heavy.

Looping back through Arizona and Utah the next day, we once again crossed the river. It was still wild, amazing to behold.

But by the time we got to Colorado, I was amazed. Here, the Colorado River was smaller, a shadow of its downstream self. The Colorado here was calm, almost meandering.

What made the difference?

Teamwork.

The downstream Colorado River is a far different creature than the upstream Colorado. The Green River and other rivers, which don't even flow from Colorado, add most of the water. It's doubtful that the Colorado River could have made much of a dent without the contributions of the other rivers.

Now, you might ask, what does this have to do with business success?

When you get right down to it, few of us act in a vacuum. Most of the great things we do involve other people. Other people influence us, mentor us, teach us, and support us. Even in the most solitary of occupations, we all have support staffs of one sort or another.
One of the most limiting mistakes people make in life is to try and do everything themselves. I use the word "limiting," because that's what it does to their potential -- it limits it.

Just as the "mighty Colorado" was definitely "un-mighty" before it picked up the contributions of other rivers, we can find that our contributions can be magnified by the contributions of other people.

Those people may be parents, spouses, children as well as co-workers, mentors, bosses, subordinates, or authors. It may be contributions of companies such as Kinko's, FedEx, or UPS. It might be ideas gleaned from of others, refined by our own experiences, or it may be areas where we are less skilled than someone else may. It might be an area where technology might make the difference, or just one additional person might turn the tide.

An acquaintance of mine has his own company. He's had great success with it, but his future is currently a bit limited by the amount of time he can spend with it. He's the proverbial one-man band -- but in order to grow wildly, he will have to add on support staff to build up the company.

In this metaphor, the one man who runs the one-man band must become the conductor of a larger group -- even the conductor of an orchestra. He uses the contributions of other people in order to get his vision of the material across -- much better than a one-man band could ever produce.

When you get right down to it, a river is merely a collection of raindrops. By themselves, each individual raindrop is merely a -- pardon the expression -- drop in the bucket. But when they work together as a team, -- and when multiple rivers of raindrops join together to make one river with a common destination -- great gorges are carved, great rapids are made, and great rivers are born.

Our great river may begin as one tiny raindrop of an idea. Coupled with the contributions of others, moving in a common channel, we can bring great change to fruition.

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