

True Grit

When you look at the phrase "True Grit," do you immediately think of the John Wayne movie?

Probably. It's a hard association to drive out of your mind. But do you have "True Grit" in your professional and personal life?

What is "True Grit?"

Without pulling out the VHS tape, and watching Kim Darby and Glen Campbell again, let's look at the definition of "grit" from our old friend Webster: "firmness of mind or spirit; unyielding courage in the face of hardship or danger." It also has a definition that refers to gravel, but that's not the type of grit we're looking for.

So, aside from John Wayne's character in the movie, who had "True Grit," and how can we get it?

The first person who comes to my mind was Winston Churchill. Faced with an overwhelming German presence that had hammered other countries until they dropped, Churchill led his country to a one-yard-line play that stopped the German advance and turned the tide of World War II. If Churchill hadn't had "grit," he would have been like his predecessor, Neville Chamberlain, who basically whined his way towards war. Compare these two passages from two very different leaders:

"Ever since I assumed my present office my main purpose has been to work for the pacification of Europe, for the removal of those suspicions and those animosities which have so long poisoned the air. The path which leads to appeasement is long and bristles with obstacles. The question of Czechoslovakia is the latest and perhaps the most dangerous. Now that we have got past it, I feel that it may be possible to make further progress along the road to sanity." -- Neville Chamberlain

"Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duty, and so bear ourselves that if the British Commonwealth and its Empire lasts for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'" -- Winston Churchill

You can see the "grit" in their speeches. The one boring, and conciliatory, the other defiant and inspiring. Personally, I believe that if German troops had invaded England, and stormed up to Number 10 Downing Street, old Winston would have spit in their eye.

What, then, is the difference? What is this grit?

When you get right down to it, "grit" is an attitude, a belief that you can conquer anything, if you stick with it. It's a belief in yourself, a determination to win, a plan for success. It's sticking to a job until "it sticks to you." It's not giving up, nor giving in. It's putting your best into a project. It's cold-calling potential customers, or not giving in to your six-year-old when she wants ice cream before dinner. We also call it "spunk," or "full of spit," or just plain "determination."

It shouldn't be a surprise that there are a couple of meanings to "determination." Determination can be what you have inside you, or it can mean a final outcome. The two are obviously related. **Your determination determines the determination of your life.**

Let's hear it for the person who tackles the problems in life head on, deals with the trials of life and living, and looks on problems as challenges and the sound of potential defeat as a call to action.

Let's hear it for the never-give-up, never-give-in, act-not-react type of individual, who has "True Grit," and who, when confronted by an adversary, spits in his eye.

I've often said that you can analyze your life by plugging yourself into a "western." Are you the hero, the villain, or the mayor, who hides while the showdown takes place? Are you the town drunk, the comic relief, or the frontier marshal who "cleans up" the west? Are you the cavalry officer who calls charge? Are you the pioneer driving a covered wagon on the Oregon Trail? Or are you the patent medicine salesman, the cheating gambler, or the dance hall girl? If you put yourself into such a western, would you have what it takes? Would you wear a white hat, or a black one? Would you have grit?

Let your mantra for this week be this: Get Grit!

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