

OVER THE EDGE

# A Day in the Life of...

**E**ACH MONTH WE EXPLORE a person, story or circumstance. It may be an individual doing extraordinary things in life or a company that has engaged clever ways to build teams or social responsibility among its employees. I share the story below of a typical day in the life of each of us. Our experiences may make us stop and take notice of our lives in a way that makes us thankful for what we have. I am thankful that I can stop to tell the story below. *Read on and don't forget to take Part III of the Edge Meter Survey Over the Edge Meter Self Assessment*

## THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS

A recent business trip to San Francisco, for the first time in a long time, was a delight. My business partner from London was joining me for the week of meetings. His calm, slow, contrasting lifestyle was refreshing. My intensity for meetings and work seemed so foreign to him. It was four days of walking, meeting, shopping, eating, "pinot" drinking, "starbucking," people watching, and heavenly bedding. I consciously elected to rest my soul from all the noise of the past few years and let it soak in as I headed home.

Every other trip I would have worked non-stop. Something clicked this time and I took control. The week had been fairly relaxing with the exception of Wednesday morning after a Tuesday evening "black diamond" fall on the concrete slopes of downtown San Francisco walking the steep hills back to our hotel. I recovered quickly from the slip falling hard, flat on my butt, catching myself with the palm of my hand before landing, just missing a head bang on the concrete. Embarrassed, I jumped up quickly! My partner was quick to provide assistance. Not to be seen as a weakling, I yanked my shoes off and walked the remaining five blocks barefooted. In the last block I noticed intense pain as I stepped sole first on the sidewalk and inconspicuously limped the rest of the way back to my hotel so my colleague would not notice.

The next morning my feet were so swollen. The pain resonated from a piece of glass stuck in my foot. It was so intense I forced my foot into a pair of shoes that did not match my suit – high-heeled, pointed-toe pumps. Ouch! I walked tenderly trying to grab something quick to eat prior my meetings. After eating,



I stand and as soon as the weight hits my foot realize that I must be at the doors of Macys, across the street, upon their opening to buy the largest, most comfortable shoes I can stuff my foot into. I have exactly 15 minutes to find, try on and buy a pair of shoes from one of the largest shoe departments on the planet. In less than ten minutes I am out the door in an oversized pair of non-descript shoes on my way to a series of meetings on a trade show floor.

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

I always wonder what purpose events have in life. The week's events with my painful foot just had none possible. On my way to the airport after the week of merger and acquisition discussions and some downtime that it was just an annoyance. My glass-impacted foot was now in a running shoe with no shoestrings, facing lines – airport security, lines to my gate, lines to board the plane. Finally, I make my way to seat, 24F. I am anxious to get home to my family, my daughter, my husband and our dog. The thought of sitting down to dinner around our

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I am thankful for the experience of the pain in my foot and I am thankful for my visit with 24G and I am thankful that I remember both...for now!

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kitchen table engaging deeply in a conversation we call "life lessons," for our daughter's sake was on the forefront of my mind.

Placing my belongings overhead, I notice my seatmate (usually eye contact with your seat mate is taboo). Immediately I felt a different kind of trip shaping up.

She was a grandmotherly woman sitting very still. Her trench coat was cinched at her withering waist. She had hints of blond hair under gray ones. Her cane was held tightly in her right hand, knuckles red from the intensity. Her purse was in her lap with her left hand clutching the straps with similar strength. It was not until I sat down that I noticed her eyes. Traces of tears remained and her eyes were red with a certain fear and sadness.

I am not sure how I knew, but I just knew, that she was both afraid and unaware of where she was going.

### A COMPANION FOR A REASON

She asked me where I was going and I said home to Raleigh, N.C. I asked where she was headed. In a split-second her red eyes were tearing, her stare went blank and my heart sank feeling her pain and frustration. I quickly changed my questions to, "Did you enjoy your stay in San Francisco?" and "What brought you here?" This jarred her recall. She was on her way back to Hartford, Conn. where she lived with her retired son and his wife. Tears continued to silently fall.

The woman barely moved our entire trip. She clutched her purse, gazed out the window and kept her coat tightly wrapped. Every 10 to 15 minutes she asked over and over about the movies, meal service and dim lights. She wondered if the agents had taken her ticket (she could not find it, but it

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## I always wonder what purpose events have in our lives.

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was in her hand that was slipped into her purse pocket to guard the entire trip), or where we were going, if she had to change planes and what would she do if she had to do so. Would there be someone to help when we got to wherever we were going? Am I going there too? Could I help?

Will I age gracefully and be one of those women that live past 100 taking dancing lessons, writing, walking, skiing or will I die a slow and painful death of forgetfulness with no turning back? Not knowing my family, their names, their children's names, not knowing my daughter or husband, fear so intense it stops you in your path. Realizing I could be this woman overcomes me. At the same time, I just can't help but feel her knowingness of her disease's effects are scary. It strikes me as I shift in my seat, the sharp spiky pain in my foot runs up my calf almost numbing my emotions and I realize my weakness for pain.

I tried to comfort her by saying I would stay and make sure she got to her gate. I ensured her that the ticket was safely tucked in her purse and not to remove the staples on the envelope (which she shared with me wondering what her daughter

wanted her to do with it) that said "DO NOT OPEN" written on the front and the back.

I had a difficult time reading and focusing on the movie. What was she thinking about? Was she remembering her trip to her daughter's home in California that she had just left? Was she trying to remember her son's name?

We never exchanged names. I did not even realize this until parting in Chicago. She only asked me where I was going and wanted to know if I lived in Chicago, was getting off there and did she have to change planes there. I wondered who must have helped her board the plane. Did her daughter and son-in-law escort her to the gate? Had her grandkids kissed her goodbye before they left home?

I assured her I would make sure she was taken care of several times and then as I began to stand I saw the tears floating quietly and secretly down her cheek. Her scared eyes looked into mine asking if she too should get up. I placed my hand on her knee instructing her to stay put. The airline attendant would come to get her very soon. Just before leaving, she once again, asked if she should come with me or stay and I said, "Just stay in your seat for someone to come get you."

My body moved forward, I fight the pain in my foot through the aisle as my mind lingered in 24F. Before leaving, I asked again if I should stay to help. She said no, she was fine and commented on my sweetness and how most people get irritated. The sadness as I looked back gripped my heart and squeezed my stomach. I could barely breathe watching her face grow with fear. I felt helpless as I moved toward the exit to deplane. The flight attendants were deep in friendly ground chat when I nudged one of them back to 24G to assist my new friend and

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By 2050, the number of individuals affected by Alzheimer's expected to climb as high as 16 million, unless something is done to delay or prevent the onset of the disease.  
([www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org) for more information)

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ease her fears that someone would help her. Stay? Keep going? Why did I not stay? Feelings of guilt overcame me. All I could do was pray that they would indeed help her.

Who will be there for me, my mom, my husband or daughter in years to come if we are struck by this awful disease? Is she being brave tackling such a trip alone, trusting that someone will be there to help her?

(Continued on next page)

