

Upside Down With Coach Spangler!

Saturday, 23 August 2008

“Champions are made from something they have deep inside them -- a desire, a dream, a vision.”
 Muhammad Ali, American Boxer
 “I learn teaching from teachers. I learn golf from golfers. I learn winning from coaches.”

-- Harvey Penick

Over the Edge and UPSIDE DOWN with Coach Spangler!

What, you might ask, is there to be Over the Edge about being upside down? Let me share the story with you and the lessons that professional women and entrepreneurs can take away from it from being Upside Down with Coach Spangler.

It happened by pure accident. My husband and I were hosting a dinner evening for a family moving to Raleigh in the early spring of 2006. We talked about schools for the kids, we discussed the area attractions, the North Carolina Beaches, our favorite restaurants, college sports and of course we talked about the business culture in the Triangle. It was not until this family of four were about to walk out the door that the couple mentioned their daughter would be back soon for a pole vaulting camp at Duke over the summer. My husband’s eyes just about popped out of his eye sockets, he visibly transformed right in front me and as though he was a ventriloquist, the grinning lips on my face parted to mouth the words with him, “I was the Connecticut State Pole Vault Champion for my division in high school”; my husband (Richard Spangler) announced to the world before us.

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I had not seen Richard so excited about anything (except the day he shot a 68 in a round of golf!). The couple, their two kids, Richard and I stood at the door for almost another hour talking about pole vaulting. Richard began to demonstrate techniques of a great vault. He shared the stages of a good vault which are; the approach, the plant, the takeoff, the swing, the clearance. He did several slow motion run throughs as though our home’s entrance were the track field, he had their daughter show him her pole grip, offered her some words of wisdom and then the family departed.

While we were cleaning, Richard fondly reminisced with me about his high school vaulting and how much he loved it. We left the conversation and his vaulting memories to that evening and did not really discuss it again, at least not for five months. Then just a few weeks into the beginning of the school year Richard received a call that would change the course of his life and the lives of many high school girls (and boys but this is a women’s magazine so we’ll discuss the girls). I am Over the Edge about being Upside Down with Coach Spangler!

Story of the Month: Over the Edge and Upside Down with Coach Spangler! A Serial Entrepreneur by day, Volunteer Pole Vault Coach by evening and founder of forthcoming PoleFlyers, an intensive camp for Pole Vaulting!

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Beyond Imagined Limitations

The plea for help came within the first few weeks of the school year kicking off. The daughter of our dinner guest (who was passionate about pole vaulting) was coach-less. There was no one with experience to coach pole vaulting at her school. Finding a coach for pole vaulting can be a challenge so we’ve come to learn. Finding a pole vault coach that has actually pole vaulted in their past is even more difficult. Finding a pole vault coach to volunteer time, with a

passion for motivating high school kids while keeping them focused and encouraging them to vault beyond their mental limitations is almost impossible. The caller was asking Richard if he'd volunteer coach the high school team. Without any hesitation he said yes. Little did he or I know, history was in the making. Coach Spangler's talent for inspiring goes far beyond anyone's expectations. And interesting for me to watch were the differences in motivating the girls verses the guys. Now, two years later, I can look at the lessons to take away from our coach for motivating professional and entrepreneurial women. I am over the edge about how much effort and energy Coach Spangler placed each teen, learning what it would take to inspire each individual beyond their personal barriers to exceed the last jumped height and to learn the differences in communicating to the teen girls verses the teenage boys.

Let's look at the vaulting girls. They are all waiting their turn to battle their greatest fears and over-achieve their wildest imagined heights many, especially the first timers, not even knowing what is required to get themselves up into the air but willing to try anything. This is one sport that the saying, "they make it look easy" does not exist. What makes a young girl want to run with a very long pole in hand then be thrust up into the air, all the while turning herself completely upside down, perfectly parallel to the pole, head to the ground while flying over a bar more than 7 to 15 ft high (the state champion height is better than 11 feet for the girls and over 15 feet for the guys) then landing in a vault pit only to go back and do it all over again working harder for a higher height.

When Richard started the team was small. The school was barely recognized for any vaulting. Now two years later and many volunteer hours, tons of parent calls and a team twice of the first day he started, two of his team members have placed one and two in the state for vaulting and were heavily recruited by the colleges and have received college scholarships. The kids love working with Coach Spangler. The very first semester he started there were very few vaulters on the team. Word about the wonderful new coach spread quickly and the try-outs were packed the next semester. Fun, motivating, a coach that communicates effectively motivating each to their individual best and is so passionate that the passion of the sport is just simply infectious ….all the elements that make up the best of the best in coaching?

To beat all that, Coach Spangler's rekindled passion for vaulting is turning into more than just volunteer coaching, Coach Spangler has now formed a pole vaulting clinic called PoleFlyers and he has high dreams for this clinic! What made all of this come to pass? And what lessons are there to take away from our Over the Edge story this month? Why are there lessons for Coach Spangler and his inspiring methods of reaching into our young teen girls as future leaders and professional women so important to us? Below are some of the lessons that we can take away from Coach Spangler's story.

6 Lessons from the Pit

Vaulting has never been recognized as a glamorous sport! Coach Spangler never imagined himself as a pole vaulting coach much less starting a pole vaulting clinic. And who would have thought that the girls would line up for a try at participating on a pole vaulting team, almost twice the number of guy vaulters in just a very short amount of time. How do the lessons inspire us to think about our businesses, our dreams and our lives? Here are 5 secrets that I've learned by watching Coach Spangler turn kids upside down!

- Authentic passion is just simply infectious. It is fun to be around people that love their crafts, their businesses or their art forms. We want to learn from them. It is even more infectious when someone communicates on a level that inspires each individual to reach for their personal best. Young teen girls need more and more to have people believe in them, to communicate with them and connect with their emotional drivers. Coach Spangler was effective at all of the above and was infectious with his passions. Business leaders … this is a terrific take away!

- Dreams sometimes start as little taps on the shoulder, if we do not pay attention to the tap we miss a dream that could become a reality. Coach Spangler's call to volunteer coach unleashed a passion for coaching, vaulting and inspiring kids! This love and passion was rekindled only by taking some small steps inspiring kids to reach beyond their mental limits every day! In-turn, the Coach reached beyond his. For Coach Spangler, after just two years of coaching, he has founded PoleFlyers and has a big dream of retiring later in life into coaching pole vaulting.

- Turning completely upside down is the only way to make the higher heights. So when is the last time you've turned your business, your job, your life completely upside down! Turning things completely around is a way to see what you are not clearly able to see otherwise.

Building greater momentum every time you run to the bar is yet another element of achieving greater heights. No heights are the runs where the kids stop before jumping and just fall into the pit. There is something inside the vaulter that just stops them in their tracks, they are not prepared, they feel the jump is too risky. The internal sensors are on full steam and these kids pay attention to the sensors. A good coach will talk them through what they felt, a great coach will roll up their sleeves and run with them trying to understand what risks they felt they were taking and improve their mental state or correct the motions so they achieve their next height. Professionals and business owners ….where are our coaches, mentors and cheerleaders to cheer us to new heights!

The poles just keep inching up and up. Like all goals the next jump is higher and harder than the previous. In order to reach the next height you may need a new pole, new techniques, stronger bodies, faster runs whatever the need it must be tackled to reach new heights. When starting a company, or transforming our businesses, or changing our careers or transforming our departments, we must learn, try new tactics, create new relationships, bring in new energy, spark new energy in existing teams and employ new strategies to reach the larger goals.

Men and Women are different!!! Very different!!!! We communicate differently, we react to various communications styles differently, we are motivated by different methods. Coach Spangler, has a college age daughter and he has a knack for recognizing the different techniques to motivate the girls vs. the guys. He did not use one way to coach all the kids but catered his coaching to be very personal and motivate each individual beyond their personal limits. Even when the teen felt they wanted to give up and they were not meant for vaulting, Coach Spangler would have them try new strategies and encourage them to continue on. The teens responded strongly to this method. Giving up is not an option! Our take away….. Giving up in a tough economy is not an option!

Getting Upside Down with Coach Spangler is a great metaphor for life and leading the way for others to achieve their personal best. In using his coaching approach, the coach actually grows along with his athletes. I think I’ll turn everything I am currently working on “Upside Down” this week… and be completely Over the Edge and Upside Down!

Let me hear from you about what you’re passionate about. I love comments and connecting with my readers. Please email me any thoughts or responses you may have the articles or a topic you may have interest in. Anything you’d love to share concerning any of the Over the Edge past stories or ideas on future stories is welcome, email me at teresa@cladventures.com subject: Over the Edge. You may also visit my blog at www.cladventures.com for past Over the Edge stories.