

Semiannual Inspiration: Change the World One Person at a Time

Greetings to family, friends, and colleagues around the world!

I have a gift for you as I celebrate my 37th birthday on June 16.

I want to show you with this message that you can change the world one person at a time. In this message, I will share a personal story, the story of Mandeep, a quote from Mother Theresa, and a call to action.

However, before I begin, you may have noticed I distribute fewer of these messages per year. That's because I now blog, update LinkedIn, and tweet inspirational content regularly. If we're not already connected on LinkedIn or if you don't follow me on Twitter, feel free to reach out, and if you need some inspiration on a day that I have not updated or tweeted, you can always check out my blog. Links to all my social media outlets appear in the signature line at the end of this message.

Okay, now back to our feature presentation!

MY STORY

The most meaningful feedback I receive about how I change the world one person at a time comes from the surveys that my Temple University students complete about my performance as their adjunct professor. At the end of each semester, the university asks them to detail my teaching strengths and developmental opportunities.

At the beginning of each new semester, I tell my Business Ethics students that I have one learning objective, one goal for them to reach by the end of the semester. I tell them that the core purpose of the course is to help them make better decisions, and in each night's class, I reinforce that core purpose.

Fast forward to the end of this past semester. If we've met in person, you know I can be pretty entertaining – I love to educate and engage, and in the qualitative feedback section of the survey, many of my students have told me I was the best professor they have ever had (I promise I am not bragging – I have a point to make!). Yet, there was one qualitative piece of feedback I loved most the past semester. One of my students wrote just one simple sentence that gave me great pause, "I learned how to make better decisions."

My heart actually skipped a beat. Wow. I helped someone make better decisions, and do you have any idea the ripple effect that will have in the world? He or she will make better decisions; others will learn and benefit; and they will make better decisions. In my teaching, I am able to change the world one person at a time.

THE STORY OF MANDEEP

I also know of someone else who is changing the world one person at a time – my pal Mandeep.

The story actually begins with someone else who decided to change the world one person at a time – a senior manager at work. This manager approached me about a year ago and asked I would help Mandeep navigate coming out of the closet at work and in his personal life. This manager had been helping Mandeep, but he wanted Mandeep to be able to talk with someone closer to his age. So, he connected Mandeep and me.

When I first met Mandeep, he had just come out at work, was nervous discussing his sexual orientation, and was spending many nights home alone in his suburban apartment. He felt stuck. So, I encouraged him to move into Center City Philadelphia, got him involved in some diversity activities at our company, and recruited him to help me and others lead the launch of our LGBT employee resource group.

Fast forward one year. Mandeep lives downtown in the heart of our most thriving LGBT neighborhood, but his story at work is more compelling. A few weeks ago, as we were getting ready to launch the LGBT employee resource group, Mandeep gave a presentation introducing the group and its purpose to a room of 50 managers, most of whom he had never met before. I simply expected him to run the managers through three PowerPoint slides, but he did much more. He talked eloquently and from the heart about the benefits and challenges of coming out at work. The chief diversity officer and I were brimming with pride as we watched Mandeep captivate the audience; in fact, many of my colleagues joined the group as straight allies after seeing a similar presentation from Mandeep.

So, what's the learning here? We all change the world one person at a time. The senior manager changed the world by connecting Mandeep and me. I changed the world by mentoring Mandeep. And Mandeep changed the world by getting up in front of a bunch of strangers and showing them that it's okay to be gay at work. I bet he inspired many straight allies to join our group, but even better, I like to think there was a closeted employee in that audience and maybe Mandeep inspired her to consider coming out and bringing her whole self to work.

MOTHER THERESA'S QUOTE AND THE CALL TO ACTION

To summarize, I'd like to share a quote from Mother Theresa that I recently posted on LinkedIn and Twitter. Please bear with me – the wording may be slightly off, but it's something like, "If you can't feed 100 people, than just feed one." We won't all discover a cure for cancer or become president or prime minister of our countries, but we can all do small acts with great love. We can change the world one person at a time.

And now I'd like to wrap up this message with a call to action – within 1-2 weeks, please email me a story of how you changed the world one person at a time. My email address appears in my signature line below. I will compile all of your responses as my next semiannual inspirational message.

Jon and I just got back from Turkey, and I am more energized than ever to change the world one person at a time. Won't you join me?

Regards from Philadelphia, PA USA,

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Have you invested in your community today?

PS – You receive a semiannual inspiration message from me approximately 3 times per year. If you would like to forward my message to others, please feel free to do so. If they would like to be added to the distribution list, please have them email me at BFish@aol.com. And if you ever decide you'd like to be removed from the list, please email me at BFish@aol.com.

PPS – Previous semiannual inspirational messages dating back to June 2008 can be found at <http://brianfishbone.typepad.com/becoming-the-blog/semiannual-inspirational-messages.html>.