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Please feel free to [send Fast:Forward](#) to a friend. Since 2004, I have shared ideas on how to be a better leader and have a more fulfilled life. There are 131 issues on our website under [Insight](#), plus 20 articles that appeared in other publications. You'll find even more viewpoints by visiting [my blog](#).

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## Ideas For Success | *December*

The most wonderful time of the year is when I feel the most joy around writing this newsletter. Each December I share the '10 Things I Learned' the past 12 months. Here now is my thank you for being a loyal reader.



**Broken Promises** – Returning from last year's Christmas trip, we discovered a large window on the back of our home cracked top to bottom. We contacted a local glass company... and the installer and helper arrived four hours after the scheduled time on a cold night. For 90 minutes we huddled in blankets as they did what glaziers do. The next morning I went outside to check their handiwork and discovered it was terrible. Then I realized the loud noise I heard when they left was their truck backing against our mailbox and knocking it askew. It took multiple unreturned calls and several trips for them to make good on their poor craftsmanship and driving skills. A few days later I remembered our next-door neighbor is in that business.

**Golden Years** – Baby Boomers are hitting retirement age every day. A 64-year-old client was hesitant to let go of his career... for fear of what to do during all that free time. I told him that everyone I know who's made the leap had the same apprehension, yet a few months after stepping out of the rat race said, "I wished I had done this sooner." A few weeks later Steve let me know he would stop working at year's end: "I picked the date and rediscovered that commitment precedes happiness – whether you're retiring, making an offer on a house or getting married."

**Energy Drain** – Our electricity provider contract came up last summer and we received a renewal offer that was 40% higher than the expiring rate. I called and said: "We're a loyal customer. What's your best deal?" The salesperson reduced it in half. I decided to price shop and found an option at the current rate, so I called back and gave them a chance to counter. "I'm sorry, but we can't do that." I let them know we would be switching and asked not to be contacted after the fact. Sure enough, two weeks into the new contract, an email arrived saying they would match the rate. Let's just say I called, confirmed we were being recorded,

## Gleeful History

The first three years of this newsletter, I wrote a second piece each issue about "11 Things You Can Learn from..." – which captured lessons to be gained from that month's featured topic.

Readers were invited to send an email to receive it. Examples of those are: Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*, Girl Scout Cookies and Putt-Putt. By far the most requested was "11 Things You Can Learn from Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer."

Last week CBS celebrated the 50th Anniversary of TV's longest running holiday special – and I'm still captivated by the little guy, Hermey the Elf, Yukon Cornelius and the Island of Misfit Toys.

As I wrote a decade ago: Rudolph never crosses my mind during the year, yet several days before and after the broadcast I say lines to our kids: 'His beak is blinkin' like a blinkin' beacon.' / 'I'm cute. I'm cute. She said I'm cuuuuute!' / "Now you come to elf practice, learn how to wiggle your ears and chuckle warmly and go hee-hee and ho-ho and important stuff like that.'

Our oldest children were 15 and 10 then. They'll be coming home soon to celebrate Christmas – and will discover we've added to our assortment of Rudolph collectibles. Meanwhile, if you would like to relive those '11 Lessons' circa 2004...

asked to make sure the president heard what I was about to share... and for 10 minutes railed about the way they treat customers. Unbelievably last week they reached out again: "We just wanted to find out why you decided to go somewhere else."

**Tempus Fugit** – I was speaking about children with another client whose kids are much younger than ours... discussing how quickly they grow up – and I mentioned Kathy and I are close to being empty nesters. (There are happy things about that thought... and sad ones, too.) "A friend of mine put it this way," he said. "When you're raising kids, the days are slow and the years are fast."

**Auto Responder** – My biggest pet peeve is inconsiderate drivers who cut in-and-out of traffic... and I typically reacted by saying: 'What an idiot!' or 'Can you believe that guy?' Last summer, after yet another incident, my son asked, "Dad, why do you care?" In that moment I realized those situations were causing me unnecessary anguish. My new response is to say, "Dude, you must be in a hurry." Then I hum a version of the year's biggest hit: "Let it Go. Let it Go. The road never bothered me anyway."

**Love Story** – My parents married in January 1946, and are deceased. A few years ago my sister handed me a stack of letters they wrote to each other during Christmas-time 1945... with Billie June at her mother's home in Ft. Worth and Tom awaiting to be discharged from the Navy in New York City. I got around to reading them this summer – and felt honored to witness the deep feelings a then 17-year-old girl and 21-year-old boy shared. That generation didn't spend much time reflecting on the past, perhaps because of the pain of the Great Depression and World War II. These 70 years later, I'm glad mom and dad chose to keep those cherished letters.



**Seek First** – The best parable I heard this year? "A mother, whose daughter was addicted to sweets, approached Ghandi and asked him to speak to the girl. Ghandi said: 'Bring your daughter back to me in three weeks' – so the mother did. He took the girl aside and told her all about the harmful effects of too many sweets and the importance of stopping bad habits. The mother thanked him and asked, 'Why didn't you just tell her that three weeks ago?' Ghandi replied: 'Because three weeks ago, I was still addicted to sweets.'"

**Polar Opposites** – At a restaurant in Toronto the waiters are deaf and the only way to order is by using ASL. While that may seem like a marketing approach, what's at work is reverse systematic bias. If you want to eat, adapt to a different set of rules. The onus is on the customer, not the person with the disability. There is much tension in this country around justice... and the solution might be to consider what others have to accept in order to exist within the systems that are creating the challenges.

**Deep Dive** – I was able to speak with CEOs at a handful of Fortune 500 companies this year. Obviously, these are smart folks who know how to adapt to the demands of the board,

it's posted on my [blog](#).

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address Wall Street with confidence and drive employees to meet expectations. Many are challenged by the ability to communicate a higher purpose – vision that has little to do with financial results. As one of my clients said: "When the mailroom person knows what's in the CEO's heart, then you really have an amazing company."

**Helping Others** – Since 2007, I've concluded this issue with the story of a charity that touched my heart. This time I couldn't choose between these two, so I'll share both:

[RAINN](#) (86 score on Charity Navigator/91% of donations at work) – So much in the news is about violence against women... and the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network is the nation's largest anti-sexual assault organization

[First Book](#) (96/98%) – Transforming the lives of children in need and elevating the quality of education, this non-profit has distributed more than 120 million books and resources to programs and schools in low-income areas

This completes 11 years and 132 issues of *Fast: Forward*. I leave you with this from the author of the *Little House* series – Laura Ingalls Wilder: "Our hearts grow tender with childhood memories and love of kindred, and we are better throughout the year for having, in spirit, become a child again at Christmas-time."

Happy Hanukkah, Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year... and continued success in all things during 2015.

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