



# Lessons

Thoughts on leadership  
by Karl Pister



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We were at the top of Rock Creek canyon in the Eastern Sierra in California, one of the most spectacular outdoor areas in the world. Peaks of nearly 14,000 feet rise above the lakes. The Milky Way galaxy stretches from horizon to horizon at night.

Not quite sure what nature does, but it seems to slow time and increase perspective. We were out on the bluff every morning to catch the first rays of sunlight on the peaks. We hiked as high as we could to get the best views of these magnificent mountain ridges. Every night-time was spent gazing up at the spectacular astronomical displays that high altitude and no light-pollution can bring. Nature focuses on the moment and sets the time frame. You can't rush nature. It goes at its own speed.

Add to the nature equation a four year old boy, a two year old girl and a seven month old infant, then the 'focus-on-the-moment' theme becomes even stronger.



Little Dorothy, our two year-old grand-daughter, while hiking around the lake, at a good clip for someone her age, slams to a stop and cries, with a very loud voice, while pointing excitedly down to the ground "AAAAANT!!!!!!!"

Right she was! There, scurrying across the path, was a little ant, no more than an eighth of an inch long. This completely stopped the walk until the ant disappeared from site. She was completely absorbed by her find and made sure that everyone else shared her focus.

So lest you think this entire writing is dedicated to Karl and his adventures, let me link it to you.

In his book *Flow: The Psychology of Optimum Experience*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes the incredible process when the mind hits a level of focus so that time seems to collapse and the brain goes to high levels of insight and accomplishment.



Most of you have had those experiences. They are remarkable. And, they DO NOT HAPPEN when there are distractions. Not to say that some of you don't manage many tasks with skill and success.

However, when the texts are beeping in, the email notifications are pinging, the meeting agenda is a 7-7 sprint...don't fool yourself. You can survive with that rhythm, but:

you will not deeply learn.

you will not create.

you will not inspire.

you will not innovate.

you will not thrive.

So then, sadly, you will not lead.

Why does corporate America pay an immense amount of money to take key executive players off-site to corporate retreats? They recognize that getting away from the routine and the pace is essential for higher level thinking.



What results, however, is that while the attempt is there, many of the executives fall right back into the grind that kills higher, thriving thought.

'Flow' needs a specific environment in which to thrive. Be intentional about it and the above, pessimistic, picture changes:

You will deeply learn.

Your creativity will increase.

Your ability to inspire will increase.

Your innovation will soar.

You will thrive.

And you will powerfully lead.

Big promises. Guaranteed results.



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