



Turtles and fence posts: sometimes we need a hand

A few weeks back I was asked in a questionnaire “what is your favorite quote?” I really had to think long and hard about that one. There are so many great quotes and tattered books of underlined wisdom I have read over the years. Nailing it down to just one was really difficult. Just then, it came to me...

“When you see a turtle on top of a fence post, chances are he did not get there on his own.”

– *Unknown*

To understand this quote, you really must accept the basic premise – despite what you may think – that turtles really *do* want to be on top of fence posts. Never mind the turtle’s purpose or what it would do once atop the fence post; you just have to accept the fact that the mission and aim of all turtles in life is to ascend the lofty heights of a fence post. But we all know that turtles were not designed to be upwardly mobile; they just can’t do it. Now, unless jumping turtles exist in some remote Amazonian river section, I think we are safe to say it is impossible for a turtle to reach the top of the fence post on its own. Quite a cruel predicament... The one thing in the world the turtle wants is completely unattainable. That is

unless the turtle has help.

This quote has powerful meaning for me. When we think about all the people in our lives who have helped us, it starts to become clear that our life goals are just a series of impossible fence posts that simply cannot be reached on our own. Making that jump to the top of the fence post is insurmountable unless we have a hand to lift us up.

As I read through business leaders' bios, backgrounds and life stories and see phrases like *self-made*, *built on his/her own*, *did it him/her-self*, I always chuckle. I picture those people as turtles staring up at a 6 foot fence post with a rocket-powered jet pack strapped to their shells. Now, while that's a nice idea for cartoons and fairy tales, it is totally ridiculous. The fact is: everyone receives help to get where they are. Whether it's a mentor who provides you with advice or guidance, a boss who advocates for your promotion, your first client/customer who takes a chance on you, a colleague who helps you get a project over the finish line...whatever it is...everyone needs help to climb that fence post. And by the way, as the lucky people who have received help from others, it is our responsibility, no, *privilege* to pay it forward to others.

So, there you go. My favorite quote summed up by a creature with an altitude problem. A beautiful analogy for one of the greatest gifts you can give to another human being: help.



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(nice to meet you)

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