

Destination overdrive: enjoying the journey

One of my favorite places on earth is Maui. I'm not sure if it's the sun, ocean, humpback whales birthing/mating or just the constant island reggae, but whatever it is, Maui has a way of melting away the stress and the cares of the world. No trip to Maui would be complete without the obligatory trip to the extreme east side of the island to a tiny remote town called Hana. Hana is far away from the relative hustle and bustle of Wailea and Ka'anapali. The only problem with Hana is, well…Hana! There is nothing there! The highlight of Hana is filling your tank at the Hana gas station where you are only charged a meager 200% premium [from mainland prices] per gallon of gas.

So, if Hana is such a "hole in the ground" why do so many tourists flock there every year? Why is it a "must-do" activity when visiting this Pacific paradise? For me, the answer is simple: making the most of your trip to Hana is all about the *journey* not the *destination*. Leave it to the Hawaiians to perfectly encapsulate one of life's most important lessons using the island itself.

The Hana analogy begs the question: what type of person are you? Are you a *journey person* or a *destination person?* There is no wrong answer and no answer is absolute; many of us weave in and out of journey and destination mode, but each of us does have a predominant condition. And for the Type-As

out there, you all fall squarely in the destination camp. Heck, I'll bet the destination people already scrolled to the bottom of the article to read the final punchline!

Destination people plan and strategize about how to get to that point on the horizon: that perfect job; the end of that engagement/project; retirement. Destination people are goal-oriented, focused and fanatical about achieving their objectives.

Journey people take their time, pause, and take in the scenery. These are the people who chat in the hallway, want to discuss your family and kids and want to know what you are doing this weekend. Again, there is no right or wrong here; just different approaches and attitudes towards time – the forward-looking person (destination-oriented) and the live-in-the-moment person (journey-focused).

I work with a lot of students and colleagues who want to know the secret of how to move up quickly in their organizations. They ask: "how do I get ahead and move up fast?" Of course there are good answers to that question in terms of the professional behaviors that differentiate high performing professionals (see article: **Congratulations, You Have a Job! Now What?**), but one thing I always encourage my students and colleagues to think about is: while moving up is important, it is much more important to enjoy the journey and learn and grow from your professional experiences. It is less about getting to that next title and more about what you learn and how you grow along the way. We already know that everyone has the potential to be a leader and that leadership traits trump title (see article: **Leadership: Title Versus Trait**) so why hurry the process?

Every project, professional experience, business challenge and strategic initiative is a beautiful detour along the road to Hana. Take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves in the moment, even if it seems like those opportunities are not a direct route to your career goal. They may be interesting off-ramps that bring you even greater joy than you thought possible. Each experience shapes you as a professional, and quite honestly, make you a better, more interesting person.

If I raced my way to Hana, I would…

…have missed some of the most beautiful waterfalls in the world.

…not have tasted fresh, hot-out-of-the-oven, local banana bread.

…not have ventured through a pitch-black lava cave extending many miles underground.

…not have had a chance to swim in crystal clear fresh-water volcanic mountain streams.

…have missed hiking down to black sand beach.

…and so much more…

Moreover, if I raced my way to Hana, all I would have to show for it is an expensive tank of gas and a whole lot more room on my camera's memory card.

The road to Hana is paved with beauty but it is better navigated using the brake than the gas pedal to fully appreciate it. So often we rush through projects, tasks and life in the hope of arriving at some unattainable destination. More often than not we find anticlimactic disappointment upon arrival and yearn for the frantic days of project panic mode (at least a little bit of it). The point is: in a world consumed with goals, objectives and milestones take some time to enjoy the experience of getting to those end-points. If you don't, you may be missing out on much of the real joy of life and work.

One of my favorite authors, Kurt Vonnegut, put it best when he told a story of his Uncle Alex…

One of the things [Uncle Alex] found objectionable about human beings was that they so rarely noticed it when they were happy. He himself did his best to acknowledge it when times were sweet.

> *We could be drinking lemonade in the shade of an apple tree in the summertime, and Uncle Alex would interrupt the conversation to say, "If this isn't nice, what is?"*
>
> *So I hope that you will do the same for the rest of your lives. When things are going sweetly and peacefully, please pause a moment, and then say out loud, "If this isn't nice, what is?"*

What beautiful advice… Mahalo nui loa, Uncle Alex: *If this isn't nice, what is?*

justin greis

hi, i'm justin

(nice to meet you)



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