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**Newsletter Issue # 14**  
**Having a Heart Attack & Not Slowing Down**



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It was tough making a choice about the topic this week. Do I write about what we are seeing in leadership in the world today or what we are not seeing; do I provide more tips on thriving in a tough economy; do I offer guidance or a checklist on engaging your employees and yourself to win...? or do I write about what my week was really all about?

On March 10th at approximately 7:30am, I had a massive heart attack. Now to set the stage, I am a 46 year old female in pretty good shape. I eat right, work out and generally take care of myself (although some would say I work too much and too hard). I don't have a lot of stress in my life other than the normal stuff most of us are dealing with on a daily basis. I am a Type I diabetic (which means I am insulin dependent) and have been for 30+ years. Heart attacks are always a concern for long term diabetics but you still don't believe it will ever happen to you.

The 'massive' heart attack happened when I was walking up the stairs at a client site Tuesday morning. I got out of breath and felt a sharp but quick pain in my chest. As soon as I walked into the conference room, I sat down for a few minutes and the pain as well as the shortness of breath went away. I just thought I was really out of shape since my travel has taken me away from consistent exercise for 6 months or so. I proceeded to deliver a three hour presentation and then have lunch with the group of executives. I felt fine and had plenty of energy.

I left the meeting, drove 30 minutes to a hotel, checked in and participated in conference calls and worked on client projects until dinner. I had a lovely dinner, a good glass of wine and went to bed early (about 9:30pm). I was tired but I had gotten up at 5am to drive to my earlier client site so it did not seem unusual to me.

At 11pm, I sat straight up in bed and was hit with excruciating upper back pain. The muscles between my shoulder blades ached with a deep, dull feeling. I had been having the back pain on and off for 3 months but thought I had just injured some muscles working out. No sharp pains anywhere so I took ibuprofen and went back to sleep...until 1am when I awoke in almost unbearable discomfort again. Now I knew I could not just keep taking 2 ibuprofen every 2 hours, but I did



Thank you for the cards, flowers, twitters, notes and other ways you have reached out over the past week or so. I deeply appreciate the incredible people I am fortunate to know and although I probably won't stop running most of the time, I might just power walk every now and then so I can continue to support you and your success in whatever small ways I can for a little longer! Thanks for letting me!

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swallow one more, pace around the room a lot because it hurt much worse to lie down and finally ended up sitting in a chair and falling asleep until 2am.....when I was wide awake again with massive, but dull upper back pain and then...the vomiting started. I literally crawled into the hotel bathroom and stayed there for an hour or so...this lovely cycle continued until about 7am. At that point, I called my client for the day and mentioned I would not make it. I showered, washed and dried my hair, ate a bowl of oatmeal and packed up. I departed the hotel at 9am and drove about 1 1/2 hours back to San Diego straight to urgent care.

You may be wondering, "Why in the heck didn't she call 911 in the middle of the night?" Well, back pain is generally not a life threatening condition. I was out of town and certainly did not want to get stuck in a hospital away from home. I stay in darn good health so could not imagine this was anything more than strained muscles that were just getting worse.

Upon arrival in San Diego, urgent care admitted me immediately, did an EKG and the doctor called 911 to transport me to the hospital. Within about three minutes of the doctor calling 911, my small room at urgent care was filled with nine or ten young, buff firemen ready to whisk me away. For a moment, I thought I had died and actually gone to firemen calendar heaven. Ah, but my dream was short lived as I was wheeled into the ER at the hospital, given nitroglycerin and hooked up to every machine available all while all my blood was sucked from me. I hung out in the ER between having dye shot in my veins, medication administered, more blood sucked out, etc. for about eight hours and then I was transported to the Cath Lab where three shiny new stents were inserted into my heart.

Then off to recovery and a flirtation with the ICU since my heart would not stabilize. Six long days later I was released with enough medication to kill a horse or to keep me around a few more years! The sharp pain with shortness of breath was my 'biggie'. The three months of nagging upper back pain, multiple small heart attacks.

It has been a roller coaster ride filled with emotional and physical ups and downs. One thing so many people have said is "slow down". But you know, this whole experience does not make me want to slow down. It does make me want to get more focused on what I contribute to who and when so I can do my darnedest to make it happen with whatever time I have left. It makes me want to suck everything I can out of what this world has to offer so I can give as much back as possible. It makes me want to make sure I am living in a way that my children will remember and be proud of. It makes me want to love my friends and family even more so there are no questions when I am gone.

I don't think I'll be slowing down, but I will treasure the moments more along the way and I will stay even

more focused on doing what I love to do - supporting others in their success - because that is what keeps my spirits high and able to ride whatever roller coaster comes my way!

So, if you had a 'biggie',

- **What would you do differently the next day? Anything?**
- **What is it you keep putting off? What are you waiting for?**
- **If you were gone tomorrow, what would you most regret? Can you do something about it now?**

...and most importantly,

- **what are you so passionate about that even a massive heart attack would not keep you away? What are you doing to make sure your life is filled with that passion?**

Answer to last edition's *Who said this?* "The art of communication is the language of leadership."  
James Humes -- former trial lawyer, legislator and bestselling author who has written speeches for five US Presidents. He has authored 28 books on rhetoric, and was awarded the OBE by Queen Elizabeth II for his historical works on Churchill and Shakespeare.

This week's *Who said this?* "Go fast and the wrinkles won't show." Find out who in the next newsletter.

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