

The door ...



Original source: Oriental tradition.

A captain of industry was looking for an able and wise manager who would have the skills and acuity to take over the running of the organization when he retired. He assembled the best managers from his own company and hired recruitment consultants and headhunters to find him additional ones who might serve his purpose.

On a particular day, all the possible contenders were assembled in a great hall of a mighty palace, which the organization had hired for that day.

The captain of industry addressed the assembled hand-picked managers.

"I have a problem, and I want to know who among you has the wherewithal to solve it. What you see in the wall behind me is the biggest, mightiest, and heaviest door in the kingdom. Who among you, without assistance, has the power to open it?"

Some of the managers simply shook their heads. It was just too big a problem. Others examined the door more closely, discussed aspects of leverage and mass, remembered theories of problem solving they had learned in business school, and admitted that it seemed to be an impossible task.

When the wisest and most respected had accepted defeat, all the others capitulated too.

Only one manager approached the door and gave it a thorough close-up examination. He tapped it, assessed its width and depth, noticed the nature and lubrication of its hinges. He checked it thoroughly with his eyes and hands. Prodding here, pushing here, poking there. Finally he made his decision. He breathed deeply, centred himself, and pulled gently on the door.

It swung open easily and effortlessly.

The others had made the assumption that the door had been locked or jammed. In fact it had been left ever so slightly ajar and the carpentry and design were so excellent only the slightest touch was required to open it.

The captain of industry had his successor.

He addressed the managers assembled there:

"Success in life and industry depends on certain key things. They are these as we have just seen demonstrated. First, rely on your senses to fully understand the reality of what is going on around you. Second, do not make false assumptions. Third, be willing to make tough decisions. Fourth, have the courage to act with boldness and conviction. Fifth, put your powers into action. Finally, do not be afraid to make mistakes."



More metaphors and similar-style stories can be found in Nick Owen's books "The Magic of Metaphor" and "More Magic of Metaphor".