

Getting Global

By Karel Murray, CSP

I heard the term “world class” the other day and unbidden, I thought “What does this have to do with me?” This was one of those times when I had obviously drifted off point unintentionally. Realizing that the speaker was referring to a global marketplace and the challenges we have on a daily basis to align concepts and business practices with the opportunities to expand to other viable marketplaces, I straightened up and paid attention.

To be frank, I’ve never had much of a world view. It isn’t a matter of not wanting to be more aware of the world around me, but I believe, it’s a function of just trying to get through the everyday business of work and family that keeps many of us isolated in our awareness.

I watched a movie from the 90’s titled “Out of the Ashes” starring Christine Lahti recently. The story is about how she, a gynecologist, survived the death camps by performing over 1,000 late term abortions in order to save the lives of the mothers. She is questioned by three bureaucrats about her experiences as she sought U.S. citizenship. After relaying one particularly gruesome story, she asks the men “Where were you when we were dying in the camps? Walking your dogs, taking your wives to dinner as we were starved and killed?” Not one of the men could look her in the eye.

That scene is one that actually got me starting to think of global awareness. I followed the humane rush of support to Japan as a result of the devastation due to the tsunami. The outpouring of support to Haiti after the earthquake makes me marvel at those people who dropped what they are doing to assist in a very personal way. With our Internet connections and almost total access to news around the world, it is almost impossible NOT to know what is going on.

When atrocities occur in another country, the decision then becomes, what can I or should I do about it? Would the actions of only one of those men that Christine Lahti questioned have made a difference or was she speaking in the rhetorical sense of the United States? When Katrina hit and virtually wiped out New Orleans or when the Twin Towers crumbled onto the New York streets, who stepped up? The national outpouring of support both physically and financially was staggering from our citizens. But, that is only natural... to take care of your own.

I guess, as I write, I’m trying to figure out when, as a citizen of the world, do I get involved? How can one voice make a difference? When does conviction step up into action, regardless of the consequences? When does a person put their family in potential turmoil in order to do the right thing?

Personally, I chose to believe that when the time is right, action will follow. That the genuine heart will overrule what the bureaucrat dictates. That scene like the one from the movie “War Horse” by Steven Spielberg (where two men, one German and one American, emerge from their World War I trench to rescue a horse that is alive but ensnared in multiple strands of barb wire) will prevail over and over during times of turmoil.

Humanity recognizes bravery, heart, and soul when it manifests itself. And perhaps, for now, that will have to be enough.

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