

I recently attended a conference in Seattle. These sessions always yield the opportunity to meet with numerous interesting and accomplished people, some new and some known. And the quest to enhance my knowledge of the industry is always fulfilled. But the classroom I describe next was unlike any other I have experienced.

Of course, anyone who travels frequently ends up in the back seat of too many taxis and limos. I usually try to engage the friendlier drivers in conversation as a way to pass my taxi time, and I encounter all types.

This driver was unique. I was first impressed by his immaculate and comfortable car. And he was very pleasant; wearing what seemed to be a genuine smile. My questions uncovered some interesting background. He had come to America seven years ago, from Ethiopia. After arriving on our shores, he sent money back to his family in Africa – much of which was to fund a life-saving surgery for his mother (When he speaks with her, he told me, she still makes a big deal of his generosity. But he brushed it off by saying “I’m supposed to help her...she’s my mother!”). He has since brought his three elementary-aged children to the US, where they are thriving. “They speak better English than I do,” he boasted. (His English skills are excellent, by the way.) He is now taking Calculus classes in his quest to earn an electrical engineering degree, and career. This will be expensive and take a few years to complete, but he vowed to see it through. “It’s an opportunity to improve myself,” he concluded. He “Thanks God for the opportunity” granted to him and his family. As I reflected upon our conversation, the profound, yet simple, nature of his comments hit me.

In this world filled with opportunities to complain about hassles and spouses and bosses and jobs and finances and politicians and domestic issues and world events, passionate pessimists can weigh down an optimistic majority. Uncounted blessings can go unnoticed. Nothing ever seems good enough.

That’s why this encounter was so refreshing:

1. This man takes the initiative to be productive
2. He makes a difference in other’s lives
3. He loves his family
4. He is optimistic and enthusiastic, and he smiles a lot
5. He appreciates what God has given him

Certainly, none of these are totally unique or new revelations, only reminders of how fortunate we are. This guy is living the American dream. And so are most of us! Whether we are *taxi drivers*, *business professionals*, the *leaders of industry* or simply *citizens*, these simple inspirations can benefit us all on a personal level. Thank God for our abundant opportunities!

I called this driver for another ride, this time to the airport. And I’ll call him on my next trip to Seattle. This is the type of person and business that I want to work with...that earns my loyalty.

On the professional level, what can we take from this? How do you and I measure up? Do our patients, clients, constituents and associates perceive us in this manner? This might be something worth striving for - every day.

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