

Your Canary In The Cave

by Michael J. Russer
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A few days ago, I returned from a very pleasant, restful stay on the beautiful island of Kauai. You may remember from my last newsletter that I planned on taking this trip to "get my smile back" after a grueling four month effort to get a new book out and develop the 3-day Advanced Workshop. In addition to the caressing tropical milieu of sun, sea, sand and mountains, this short respite gave me a quiet opportunity to think about why I lost it (my smile, that is) in the first place.

After a bit of relaxed beachside contemplation it was clear that I had fallen back into my old "human-doing" ways again. I don't smile much when I'm too busy "doing". It's more like a determined, focused grimace showing the strains of "just trying to get things done --d**n it!". Unfortunately, as productive as it may seem, this is a perfect recipe to get off track from the "moment" and my true life purpose. And when that happens, I typically lose that toothy smile of mine. In this way, my smile is like a canary in the cave, when it falls over, I know something is amiss --a sort of early-warning system for my spirit.

A friend of mine, who outwardly gives the appearance of a very successful and together life called to tell me he's a mess and needed a friendly ear. After listening to all the things that were currently going wrong for him, usually in the form of a non-stop panoply of complaints, it occurred to me that chronic complaining was his "canary in the cave". Clearly this was the clue that something was not quite right with my friend's life.

Canaries were very useful to miners in that they let them know when unseen danger lie ahead in mine shafts (usually in the form of deadly gas), indicating that an immediate change of direction was required. Take a moment right now to think about what your canary looks like. That way, when you see it "fall over" you know it's time to take appropriate corrective action.

Here's hoping that your canary stays alive and healthy for the rest of your life.

About the author: Michael J. Russer is an internationally renowned speaker, author and visionary about the Internet, business productivity, career fulfillment and Virtual Outsourcing. He is known as the "Father" of Virtual Outsourcing for small business, the exclusive Internet columnist for Realtor Magazine and strategic consultant to some of the largest service organizations in the world.

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