

Hold on to the Best and Let the Rest Fall Away

As Montgomery College continues to evolve and transform with a new president and changing protocols as the pandemic wanes, we should reflect on the past and move forward into our future. The irony, though, is that it can be difficult to put the past behind us—especially if we cling too long to what once was because what was... never will be again. We can't get saddled with memories of the past—any more than we get bogged down with the present. There's no going back. Instead, we take the best and kick the rest away.

Think about times of great transformation over the past 20 years. September 11, the financial crisis, the great recession, COVID19. The experiences and lessons learned should never go away—they keep accumulating. We build on top of them, layer upon layer, as they inform and influence where we focus our energy.

If we view these moments through this “prism of positivity”—of looking for what will best serve us in a new world—the long goodbye will lead to a long-awaited hello in several ways.

Be a leader

Leadership is all about inspiring others to believe and enabling that belief to become tomorrow's reality. If you accept this definition, then ask, “why not?” If, in March 2020, you knew the three-week working remotely would last more than one year, would you have believed it? Better yet, would you have embraced it? Probably not. However, now the idea of working from home—a kitchen table, a sofa, or a spare bedroom—is comfortable. With MC offering telework options again, that reality may continue in a limited way for some employees. Why not?

How about hiring people without meeting them in person? Why not?

Will you continue to have office meetings in Teams or Zoom? Why not?

Instead of driving to a different campus, sometimes taking longer to drive than the meeting, will you meet virtually? Why not?

All these realities and more is our norm; instead of asking why we're empowered to ask why not. Take the lead.

Human doings—or human beings?

“People are our greatest asset.” While some may not have believed this statement in the past, in the Covid era, this belief is becoming the way of work. Putting people first is important at MC. We are beginning to ask what happens if we don't have our people? What if they leave? What if we can't find the talent we need? These concerns are discussed at the senior management level as baby boomers retire, and Gen X and millennials leave.

Thinking about people as human beings. “Radically, human leaders understand that the very fabric of their organizations is not woven by “human doings”—they are human beings, each with “a story behind the story” and a deep-seated need to belong, to be part of something bigger than themselves.” Whether they work at MC for a few or many years, each person is important. Each year people work at MC is an investment worth making.

Take the best; leave the rest. Of all the changes we have experienced over the past few years, one of the most dramatic has been the workscape. It's no longer all about the physical—the office, the bricks and

mortar we used to associate with work. Now it is all about the relational—the experience of how we work and how we make others feel.

“Over the past few years, everything we’ve experienced has been turned on its head. For the younger generation, working virtually is all they know. Now, we all need to think about how we inspire, create, and, most importantly, connect.”

The answer can be found in what we’ve learned: the power of transforming self-interest into shared interest; uniting, not dividing; coaching and mentoring and not just evaluating, and sponsoring, not simply supporting.

Look around. We aren’t the same College we used to be. We may not be where we want to be, but being a leader and asking, “why not?” and regarding our colleagues as human beings more than human doings, can we truly aspire to all that we might become. Hold on to the best!

–inspired by Gary Burnison, Korn Ferry CEO, in a February 20, 2022, newsletter.

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