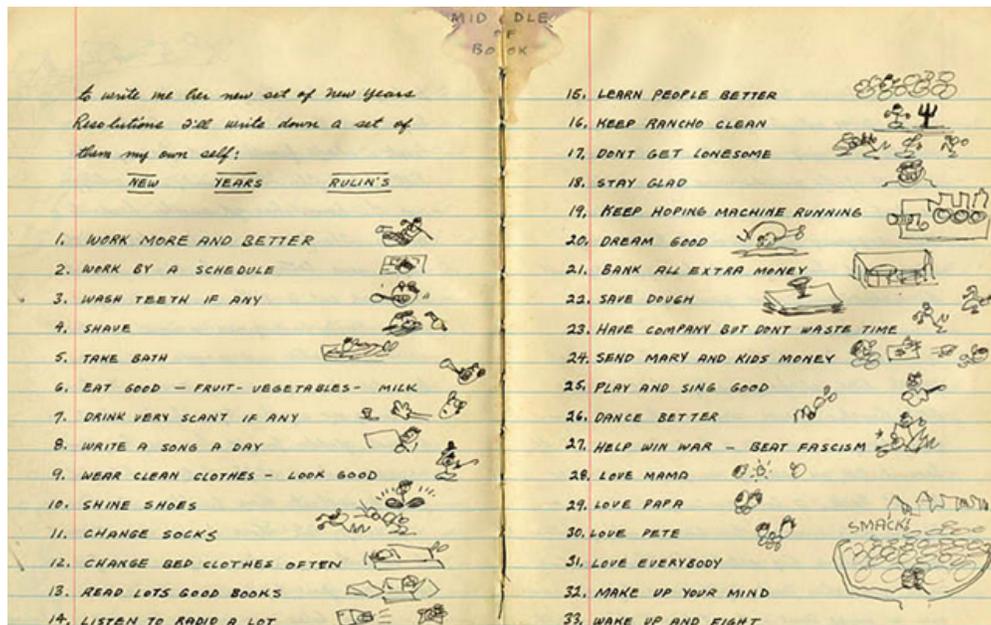


The TAO of Yes & 2016 Resolutions

By Tom O'Shea, CMC Organizational Agility Practice Leader

One year ends ... the next begins. This is the time when many of us are making resolutions for change ... some involving small lifestyle adjustments and some dreaming of dramatic transformation. My favorite collection of New Year resolutions comes from American folk music legend Woody Guthrie back in 1940's. Woodie's list covers a wide range of activities and aspirations about his lifestyle and for which we have no reports about his success rate. While many of Woodie's resolutions involved new and improved behaviors, some involved developing and maintaining a certain mindset e.g. DON'T GET LONESOME AND STAY GLAD! I am thinking that 33 New Year resolutions is a pretty large list under any circumstances. It reminds me in a way of how some organizations build their annual list of key initiatives ... a collection of random and ambiguous exhortations.



I do think, however, that the notion of shaping a positive mindset is one of those keys to happiness as well as the kind of adaptability and resilience leaders and teams need to be successful in the 21st century business merry-go-round. In fact, I believe there is a fully



actualized state that I call THE TAO OF YES that represents the kind of openness for learning, possibilities and change I believe is an essential positive trait for leadership in this era. As Wikipedia defines it ... TAO is "the intuitive knowing of "life" that cannot be grasped full-heartedly as just a concept but known nonetheless through actual living experience of one's everyday being". TAO or DAO, as it is sometimes referred, are represented by many familiar Chinese symbols including the BA QUA which symbolizes the pursuit of DOA with lanes of activity emanating from the central core.

Sounds like pretty deep stuff – especially for early in January! It is the idea of “TAO” representing alignment of a meaningful concept being defined through our actions that makes it an interesting and applicable construct in shaping a culture of agility and leadership behavior. Ultimately, our firm is dedicated to exploring and understanding the TAO OF AGILITY but I think it’s important to start with the notion of YES.

The mindset of YES can also be found in many aspects of our everyday lives. For example, one of my passions is playing contemporary acoustic music in my church group that happens to be called the YES CHOIR. Here the meaning of YES reflects a more spiritual openness to share music and message. The TAO in this YES orientation builds from a core belief system that lives out through the experience of music and hopefully aligns with good deeds and behaviors everyday ... or at least most days.



The widely touted notion of WALK THE TALK is a good and simplified representation of TAO in action. The “talk” aligns to a core set of values or beliefs that leaders at all levels share and espouse with the “walk” representing those aligned experiences and daily decisions that bring them to life. I am actively working with a newly promoted President running a complex global business unit. Amid the multitude of initiatives, his biggest priority is actually engaging his leadership team to define and reshape the TAO OF YES across their organization. How can you shape your future through a positive belief system in your strategy, actions and value system?

Agile and successful organizations build a strong TAO around core values, operating principles and shared understanding of value drivers that percolate and invigorate at all levels. Are you in touch with the core values that define you as a leader and the kind of leadership culture you are building in your organization? How about your reflection on the “actual living experience of one’s everyday being” of these values or operating principles in action? How should you set your resolutions for shaping and invigorating your TOA of SUCCESS in 2016? I encourage you to keep your list a little shorter than Woodie and I would also love to hear your thoughts and ideas. Best wishes for your journey in 2016.



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