

YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW

"Sometimes unintentionally - many times over"

by Michael T. Walsh, QI, CPIM

Seems straightforward – when we plant a seed, something will grow. Eventually, the growth might yield a harvest, perhaps a bountiful harvest in life perpetuation of humans, animals, grains, flowers, etc. The words “eventually” and “might yield” from above suggest the process is something other than automatic. Fact is, some seeds do not grow (take a look at my front lawn) or don’t grow well enough to harvest. Many factors enter here. Did they germinate? Were climate and weather requirements satisfied? Was the proper care and handling applied? Attention to all the elements of maintenance must also be considered.

We could expand this original saying to include: **“You Are What You Eat”** – eating less usually results in a thinner body vs. more food = more weight. **“No Pain, No Gain”** – Often associated with “You Get, What You Give” and “Maximum Results Requires Maximum Effort”. The common theme here is that work gets results.

My wife and I were walking around the yard a few months ago, reviewing the status of our flowerbeds. Right on queue, the planted purples were sprouting next to the planted whites; the planted short border plants in front of their taller companions. Just as it should be – all in order – all except, where did that Marigold come from? Look here, a few Pansies are growing under the Maple tree. Obviously, the birds or animals had a hand in planting or replanting and transplanting seed - a play of nature without expectation of positive bounty.

More recently, we noticed several large yellow flowers showing through a very dense bush near our property line. Upon closer inspection, we found pumpkin plants had grown up into the bush – their large leaves and flowers taking over, soon yielding small green globes. *How cool is this*, we thought! Volunteers had sprung from the very spot where we tossed last Halloween’s rotting leftovers. Imagine that, we might reap from what we did not sow.

A few weeks ago and a long way from home, I was conducting a workshop. While trying to connect two or three thoughts, I posed a “What If?” question to the group. One woman from Ohio, a Senior VP of a good sized company, responded that she was married with children and had a great career in spite of the economy. Then she revealed that over fifteen years ago, I had helped her through an onsite CPIM program when she lived in Massachusetts as an unmarried, transitional employee. She has long incorporated APICS training as a staple of professional education, having fond memories of her learning process and our thoughtful explorations of “What if.”

WOW! Her comments were unexpected. What an example of “Reaping What You Sow!”

Time is not always an appropriate measurement of success. I drew from this experience that we never really know the deeper needs of our audience. To be successful educators, we can only hope to plant a seed – to open eyes and minds. We can teach to assist passage of an immediate exam and assume success. Or, we can plant the seed and wait – no matter the length of time required -- and witness success by the actions and decisions of students as they plant their own life’s landscapes.

Mike Walsh has long been fascinated with clichés, axioms, fables and tales of yore. Where did “that” come from or what was being seen or heard when a phrase was first uttered? This series of articles integrates old sayings such as “You Reap What You Sow” within the context of Mike’s own personal experiences. Send Mike an E-mail @ Mikewalsh.QSG@comcast.net or visit the Quality Solutions Group at www.QSG.net