

# Work / Life

Get  
Your "But"  
Out of the Way!

## Highlights

- Get Your "But" Out of the Way
- A Work of Art
- Real Notes By Parents
- Tea
- Snow Crystals
- Stillness In Motion
- Understanding Style, Improving Communication
- Tuition Tactics

## NAVIGATOR

### MANAGEMENT TIP

#### How to Avoid Discounting Your Own Accomplishments.

So, I'm having this great conversation with one of my best friends and colleagues, Bill Bastian. We hadn't seen each other in a couple of months because our schedules were a bit crazy, but here we were—finally—settled down on his sofa in his apartment in San Francisco having tea and the opportunity to get caught up.

Bill starts telling me about an event he had just completed for a client. Bill creates "fire walk" experiences for corporate folks ([www.sparksdevelopment.com](http://www.sparksdevelopment.com)), and the previous weekend he did a program for a repeat client that went even better than he could have ever imagined. In a word, despite the conference having several other better-known—even "world-class"—speakers, his event was rated the highest. They absolutely loved him and his program.

Like many of us in the speaking and the meetings and conference industries, Bill's business took a significant downturn after the combined impacts of 9/11 and the implosion of the local dot.com economy. (If training and development are the first to go during an organizational financial crisis, you can just imagine where that puts things like fire walks.) Before then, Bill had almost achieved world-class status himself, having been asked to produce the fire walk segment for the television show "Survivor" during its first season.

"Wow! That's fantastic!" was the only thing I could say, because, well, it really was fantastic. "It's likely to lead to more work, I'll bet," I added.

"Well, normally, I'd like to think so, BUT . . ." and then Bill started a list of reasons as to why in this particular instance it probably wasn't going to lead to any additional work.

We talked on, and the conversation turned to Bill's more immediate endeavor, one that has taken him back to school to develop a different career for the long term. He again shared some great news. I acknowledged it, and—as is my normal habit—I extrapolated to some not-too-much-of-a-stretch wonderful thing that could happen as a result.

"Maybe, BUT . . ." And again, Bill told me why that wasn't likely.

I think we may have gone on along these lines two or three times before I said the words that suddenly popped into my head: "Bill, you really need to get your 'BUT' out of the way!"

At first we were both startled into silence by the familiar phrase with its revised meaning, and then we both started to laugh uncontrollably. What followed was a somewhat serious discussion about how each of us gets in our own way by arguing either for our own limitations or for limitations on the good that could come to us from somewhere else.

This was familiar territory to me because I have this same tendency, although for

whatever reason that particular day it was a lot easier to see it manifesting itself in Bill's conversation than it normally is to see it in my own. But I have a group of loyal and committed friends—including Bill—who catch me when I'm doing the same thing.

And we all do it. Seriously, we do. Something spectacular happens to us or is done by us, and the first thing we do is discount it. Why that is, I'll never know, and I'm not interested in investing the time and money in the therapy sessions that might be needed to find out. For me, it's enough to recognize it and make an effort to stop it.

And stopping it is important—indeed, it's imperative. Don't fool yourself into thinking that it's not. Each of us—you, me, him, her, each of us—creates the "reality" we experience directly from our thoughts. ("If you want to change your life, change your thoughts.")

#### Management Tips

Every one of us has the automatic "but" mechanism. As I said elsewhere, I haven't got any idea where this comes from—maybe it's in our genes—but I think it's unlikely that understanding where it comes from will help us in our progress to rid ourselves of it and its impact.

There are things you can do, however, that can be extremely useful in helping you get your "but" out of the way of your own life and your success.





