

What Are You Willing to Do, That No One Else is Willing to Do?

In mid-October of 2006, the love of my life, Melanie, got out of the bathtub and mentioned her skin itched badly and it would not stop. We assumed that it might have been the bath oil that she used, so we dismissed it as a topical issue (as something on top of the skin that created the itch, like the bath oil). The itching did not stop and it progressively got worse so we considered all the possibilities and changed laundry detergent, soap and anything else that we believed could be causing this unusual condition. We even re-washed all of her clothes in allergy free washing soap, which we believed would eliminate the itching, but it did not.

Each day it got worse. By the second week she was scratching herself so hard that she was bruising and damaging her skin. One day, her mother stopped by her office and chatted with her briefly and asked if she was feeling alright because she did not look normal. When her mom got home, she called back to Melanie and asked if her urine was dark yellow and Melanie confirmed it was. Her mother, who did medical transcription for many years, told Melanie that she believed she might have Hepatitis because of the color of her urine and the fact that Melanie's eyes were also yellowed. She encouraged her to get to the doctor right away and get checked out, which we did.

We arrived at her primary care physician's office and they took blood samples and sent them off to the lab. The next day we were sent to the emergency room where they performed an ultra sound on her around the mid section of her torso. They gave us a prescription for a drug to help reduce her itching then sent us home for the night. The next day, they called and requested us to come back to the hospital where they requested a CT scan to get a better look at her internal organs. We were waiting in the emergency room for some type of word on what her condition might be, fearing what we thought would be the worst case scenario, which would have been Hepatitis. A couple of hours later the emergency room doctor came into the room holding his cell phone and told Melanie that they had her primary doctor on the telephone, who wanted to talk to her. Melanie picked up the telephone, listened intently for a couple of minutes and then a look came to her face that I shall never forget, because her face went blank and almost numb from shock. Her doctor informed her that she had pancreatic cancer.

They requested that we go home, go on-line and read about pancreatic cancer while they put a plan in place to find solutions. We walked out of the hospital in complete disbelief and in utter shock. How could she have cancer? She has no cancer in her family and pancreatic cancer normally impacts people in their 70s, not someone who is a healthy 51 years young. Thank goodness, the drugs they gave her hit hard and when she got home she immediately fell asleep. The news of that day changed not only Melanie's life, but the lives of everyone who knew her.

I began to read about pancreatic cancer on-line and there was absolutely no good news to be found. Most websites said the same thing: Approximately 4% of the people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer will survive five years but most will not make it even one year. My heart raced and my body heated up as a flash of my life without this incredible woman passed before me and I became terrified. At that moment, her survival became the "Most important" thing in my life.

From morning to night my days were filled with on-line research trying to find the experts in this field who could save her life. I called every hospital in the United States that had experts on this type of cancer and most of them referred me back to the Northwest where we had some local experts. The

doctor that kept popping up as the person with the most experience in the type of surgery she needed, which was called a “Whipple Procedure,” was at the University Medical Center in Seattle, which was only a 15 minute drive. Being proactive, I also got the names of two other doctors in two other hospitals who were also very good, just as a backup.

The doctor at our local hospital, where our diagnoses was first given, told us that he would be able to get us an appointment with a surgeon in about four weeks to review our case and schedule surgery for a later date. I knew pancreatic cancer well enough by now to know that time is not on our side, so I began to call the three doctors that I had researched as our best options. Each of the doctor’s offices told me that they were very busy and it would be four weeks before we could even get a first introduction appointment. I begged for quicker action or other alternatives, but to no avail. Meanwhile, our local hospital checked Melanie back in for a surgery to implant a stint into a bile duct to open it up, which would help reduce the itching and buy us some time until she could have the Whipple procedure. The machine that they use to implant the stint broke down for some reason so they had to stop the procedure about half way through and send her back to her room. We were told that they would have the machine fixed and the stint operation was rescheduled for the next day.

I made the decision that day that I would not allow her to die and if 4% can survive this horrific cancer, she would be one of the 4% (Why not? Someone has to be it). Remembering that saving her life is the “Most important” thing to me, I decided I needed to be willing to take extraordinary measures if I wanted to continue to have my extraordinary life with this fabulous woman. The stint surgery that they were going to do on her tomorrow was not going to fix her, it was just going to buy us time. Furthermore, it still put her at risk because of the potential for complications and possible death (and there was a likelihood of that with this intricate operation).

I took the CD disc of the CT scans that the hospital gave us and burned three copies on my lap top computer. I made a collage of family photos on an 8” x 10” sheet of photo paper, which showed Melanie at play with her family. I know that doctors see CT scans every day but they do not always get to see the face of the people who they are making decisions about. I knew I had to pull out all the stops so tugging at a doctor’s heart strings was not beyond my abilities. I also grabbed three copies of my first book titled “The Ultimate Guide to Exceeding Customer Expectations” (Did you expect anything less from me at this point?). I put on my favorite (and lucky) purple shirt, suit and tie, packed the CT scan discs, photos of Melanie and my three autographed books and drove to each doctor’s office to drop them off.

My first stop was the University of Washington Medical Center because the doctor that had the most experience with this type of surgery was a gentleman named Dr. Mika Sinanan. His secretary met me and was very nice as she, once again, explained how busy he was, but she would be glad to take him the things I had delivered. After I left the U of W Medical Center I went to the other hospitals in Seattle and made my delivery to their offices as well, also being told that the chances were slim of an appointment within four weeks, let alone surgery. I was driving back to our local hospital where Melanie was waiting for her stint surgery the next day and my cell phone rang. I answered and it was Dr. Sinanan himself. He told me that he looked at her info and if I could bring her into the hospital this afternoon, he would perform the Whipple Procedure which she so desperately needed tomorrow morning. I drove back to the local hospital, checked her out and drove her immediately to the U of W hospital where we checked her in. The seven hour surgery was performed successfully on November 4, 2006, and Dr. Sinanan told us that her cancer tumor was pressing against an artery and it almost wrapped it. If that would have happened, he would not have been able to do the surgery and the outcome could have been much different.

Melanie is indeed on her way to becoming one of the lucky 4% that survive more than five years, because as of the writing of this book, she is four years along, healthy and cancer free. My question to you is: what are you willing to do, that no one else is willing to do, in order to have the things that no one else has? I did something that most people might not have done in order to save Melanie's life because it was the "Most important" thing to me. It was the "Most important" thing to me because the perceived level of pain was so high. What is the "Most important" thing to you and what are you willing to do in order to achieve it? Which motivator is the driving force behind your desire: pain or pleasure? An extraordinary life requires extraordinary actions, so give serious consideration to your desires and what motivates you.

Brad Worthley is an accomplished business consultant with over 37 years of management experience. He is also an internationally acclaimed leadership, customer service and motivational expert who has trained hundreds of thousands of people in a wide range of industries throughout the world in the last 22 years. He has authored three books and produced numerous training videos and audio programs. You can sign up for his monthly newsletter at www.BradWorthley.com.