

mbj

Marianas Business Journal

Volume 16 No. 22

www.mbjguam.com

March 4, 2019 - March 17, 2019

The parable of the oranges and career impact

BY JON C. ULLOA

"Imagine a world in which the vast majority of us wake up inspired, feel safe at work and return home fulfilled at the end of the day." — Simon Sinek, author, The Infinite Game

For this column, I thought I'd share the single most powerful lesson that has shaped my professional career. I must also ask you, the reader, to forgive me if you feel this is repackaged material. That is not my intent, nor — in the irony of this impactful message I'm sharing here — is it wise for me to reinvent the wheel when the parable itself profoundly transcends this. That would not do the lesson, its teachers and ultimately you, the reader, any justice. One of the reasons why I find this so inspiring is because anyone, young or old, can use this to make an impact at any stage in their career.

The lesson is found in the Parable of the Oranges:

There was a young man who had ambitions to work for a company because it paid very well and was very prestigious. He prepared his resume and had several interviews. Eventually, he was given an entry-level position. Then he turned his ambition to his next goal — a supervisor position that would afford him even greater prestige and more pay. So he completed the tasks he was given. He came in early some

mornings and stayed late so the boss would see him putting in long hours.

After five years a supervisor position became available. But, to the young man's great dismay, another employee, who had only worked for the company for six months, was given the promotion. The young man was very angry, and he went to his boss and demanded an explanation.

The wise boss said, "Before I answer your questions, would you do a favor for me?"

"Yes, sure," the employee said.

"Would you go to the store and buy some oranges? My wife needs them."

The young man agreed and went to the store. When he returned, the boss asked, "What kind of oranges did you buy?"

"I don't know," the young man answered. "You just said to buy oranges, and these are oranges. Here they are."

"How much did they cost?" the boss asked.

"Well, I'm not sure," was the reply. "You gave me \$30. Here is your receipt, and here is your change."

"Thank you," the boss said. "Now,



Ulloa

please have a seat and pay careful attention."

Then the boss called in the employee who had received the promotion and asked him to do the same job. He readily agreed and went to the store.

When he returned, the boss asked, "What kind of oranges did you buy?"

"Well," he replied, "the store had many varieties — there were navel oranges, Valencia oranges, blood oranges, tangerines and many others, and I didn't know which kind to buy. But I remembered you said your wife needed the oranges, so I called her. She said she was having a party and that she was going to make orange juice. So I asked the grocer which of all these oranges would make the best orange juice. He said the Valencia orange was full of very sweet juice, so that's what I bought. I dropped them by your home on my way back to the office. Your wife was very pleased."

"How much did they cost?" the boss asked.

"Well, that was another problem. I didn't know how many to buy, so I once again called your wife and asked her how many guests she was expecting. She said 20. I asked the grocer how many oranges would be needed to make juice for 20 people, and it was a lot. So, I asked the grocer if he could give me a quantity discount, and he did. These oranges normally cost 75¢ each, but I paid only 50¢. Here is your change and the receipt."

The boss smiled and said, "Thank you; you may go."

He looked over at the young man who had been watching. The young man stood up, slumped his shoulders and said, "I see what you mean," as he walked dejectedly out of the office.

What was the difference between these two young men? They were both asked to buy oranges, and they did. You might say that one went the extra mile, or one was more efficient, or one paid more attention to detail. But the most important difference had to do with real intent rather than just going through the motions. The first young man was motivated by money, position and prestige. The second young man was driven by an intense desire to please his employer and an inner commitment to be the best employee he could possibly be — and the outcome was obvious.

Despite my Google research, I do not know the parable's origin, yet I have encountered it numerous times on Forbes.com and various internet searches. It's a universal message similar to Steve Jobs' famous 2005 Stanford Commencement Address, Simon Sinek's "Start With Why" viral interview, and TED talks I've found inspiring. Today, I am not the author, I am the student sharing what I've learned. **mbj**

— Jon C. Ulloa is a financial advisor at Asia Pacific Financial Management Group, specializing in smart money strategies for business owners. He can be reached at julloa@fmguam.com.