

Never ignore the talent of our fellow humans

by Mark Pavilons

Never ignore talent, is an idea I've come to embrace over the years.

In my job, I've met thousands of interesting souls, all of whom have some talent, skill or accomplishment.

Some I can relate to, but many others are totally foreign. Those unique or complicated areas of expertise only serve to make me more curious and more intrigued.

I've met numerous music stars, athletes and scientists, all with tremendous capabilities and passion for what they do. I've interviewed several engineers who've worked on space projects - articulated robots working in zero gravity and the like. I can never really fathom the math and engineering that goes into creating these gizmos, but their value and contribution is evident. And so are the individuals behind the work.

Locally, I've seen plans to go from the drawing board to reality in all of their glory. A huge team of people, each with their own expertise, combined to make such things a reality.

One of the reasons I love my profession is that I get opportunities, on a weekly basis, to learn something new.

Residents read this newspaper and while most have gotten the chance to get to know me, there is still some fuzziness as to what journalists and editors do. My dad never really understood why I wanted to be a journalist. It took him many years to understand and appreciate just what I do.

We are in the service industry and the only tangible project we produce is the publication, whether it be a newspaper, magazine or online publication.

Yes, I write stories, take photos, make sure local events are covered. I prioritize articles and I assign stories to reporters and freelancers. I physically design the pages of each page in the newspaper. I am, at times, a one-armed paper-hanger.

I have to give every story, every item, a value and weigh it in terms of what impacts our readers. I also have to make sense of a multitude of government initiatives and staff reports.

I do these things with relative ease, but that ability has taken years to foster and hone.

So, I draw upon my own expertise, in order to weave stories and tell tales of the accomplishments, or predicaments, of others. I craft thousands and thousands of words, in the hopes I can shed some light on local events, issues, characters and societal trends.

Through it all, I maintain an admiration of the talents of others I encounter along the way.

We've always been encouraged to play to our strengths and use what God gave us. Most of us do, often without even thinking about it.

But in typical Canadian fashion, we tend to underestimate and play down what we do well.

Journalists are often undervalued and criticized. This job doesn't always do wonders for the ego.

I can recognize talent and value and I can then highlight them in the pages of the newspaper. While I deal with a small staff, I tell

them when they've done a good job, and I encourage them to continue to hone their craft.

Managers, especially in today's workforce, need to spot talent and let employees know they are valued members of the team.

A lot of our own humility and dismissiveness comes from our self-esteem. This one very important ingredient is never taught and suffers a constant beating at the hands of others. Self-confidence, not to be confused with ego, needs to be nurtured and this will, in turn, bolster talent, creativity, productivity and yes, loyalty.

Many of us downplay our strengths, and find it difficult to even write of list of them.

I mentioned a lot of it comes from self-esteem and inner strength. But if we only paid more attention to ourselves, we'd discover a treasure trove of talent. We go about our business and there are likely a couple of 'eureka' or 'ah ha' moments every week - things that come together and we take a moment to absorb.

It's okay if no one else notices. We know.

I happen to love trivia and soak up as much as I can by reading anything and everything. Others sometimes get annoyed at my prowess, but it sure comes in handy in certain board games and while watching Jeopardy!

One exercise I undertook recently was jotting down all the really great qualities of my wife Kim. Those qualities - things that attracted me to her in the first place - are quite extraordinary. They encompass talent and inherent goodness. She's assertive, strong, and an incredibly compassionate individual. She's a nurturing and watchful mother and can be like a bear with her cubs. She has an amazing memory and is always level headed in emergencies. She works hard.

I could go on and on. So, if we all did this for our spouses or significant others, you'd be surprised at the talents and skills they possess.

Instead of mounting those cat posters on the wall, maybe we should all wear our strengths like badges. It may seem forward, but what's wrong with reminding others about how great we are?

Managers and team leaders often promote their team's strengths. They encourage them and slot them in the most suited roles. When people feel strong, they are willing to venture into new territory, and consider new ideas.

We do this at home, without really noticing. One spouse tends to handle the finances, while the other is a sleuth at sniffing out bargains. One may do the dishes while the other vacuums. We use what we have to get the job done!

Talent isn't always inherent and needs all the encouragement we can give it.

During these trying times, try to recognize the talent that abounds in your own household. Give it a shot in the arm!