

UP, UP AND AWAY!

A LIFE OF ADVENTURES



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WE are concentrating on the graying population theme this week, and I have finally had the chance to watch *Up*, after being coaxed many times to watch this Pixar animation by our gregarious intern Sarah.

The story revolves around a senior citizen named Carl Fredricksen. Indeed, it is a beautiful story touching the very core of humanity about aging, grief, loss, a generational gap and redemption.

Any spoilers in this article will not matter anymore (I hope) because by now, I think most people have watched *Up* already.

If you have forgotten the story, I hope this article will make you want to watch it again.

Here are several takeaways from this heartwarming 2009 animation.

● STEER TOWARDS YOUR DREAMS

Many of our dreams may lie dormant because of circumstances in life, but it is never too late to start fulfilling them.

After receiving news that they can never have children, Fredricksen and Ellie refocus to save enough money to move their house to Paradise Falls, their life-long dream since young.

However, the money they saved in a jar was always used for

household emergencies.

Fredricksen then rekindled that dream after Ellie's passing and when he was advised to register himself at a retirement home.

The key here is to continue believing in your dreams and not to give up fulfilling them one by one. On a related note, perhaps it is the vision you want your organisation to have.

Your organisation may have been sidetracked by the many obstacles that come along the way, and a refocus is needed to help you stay on course of its core vision and mission.

● COMPLEMENT ONE ANOTHER

We know that no man is an island. Even Bono of U2 sang it in *Sometimes You Can't Make It On Your Own*.

In *Up*, we see how a lone journey by Fredricksen to Paradise Falls was made more eventful with the accidental and colourful characters of Russell the young wilderness explorer, Dug the golden retriever and Kevin the mysterious giant bird.

Even though Fredricksen was initially hesitant to accept them as part of his personal journey, he eventually found himself developing a connection with his newfound friends, thereby helping and protecting each other.

At the end of the day, Russell and Fredricksen found themselves working together to complement one another. Russell received his final "help the elderly" merit

badge and Fredricksen was able to start a new adventure in his life with Russell and Dug.

Likewise, in an organisation, we leverage on each other's strengths to accomplish a task. We learn to complement one another by developing relationships and a sense of trust to achieve a common goal.

● RISE UP IN HUMILITY

Now, a special mention to Dug who may be considered a misfit to others, but was genuinely sincere in fulfilling his purpose.

Being different from the rest, Dug was sent away on a false mission by his leader, Alpha, even though Dug naively didn't realise Alpha's intention to get rid of him.

Dug remained obedient to Alpha's instructions to find the mysterious bird and eventually succeeded in doing so. Dug rose up in humility when he defeated Alpha to become the new leader of the pack.

● STAY TRUE TO WHAT IS RIGHT

Fredricksen had always idolised Charles Muntz, a famous explorer, since he was a child, and we can only imagine the childlike excitement in Fredricksen when he actually met his hero in his golden years in Paradise Falls.

Thus, it takes courage to stay true to what is right when Fredricksen recognises the danger Kevin was in when his hero spoke about his life mission to find the mysterious bird, no matter what

it cost.

In an organisation that may be going down a crooked path, would you stand your ground to blow the whistle and question senior leaders about certain wrong judgments they may be making? Or would you just follow their instructions blindly?

Would you be a "Sherron Watkins" to warn your leader about the organisation's irregularities, as in the case of Enron?

Of course in doing so, you must be prepared for potential consequences, as Fredricksen found that he and his friends had to literally run for their lives from Muntz.

● LET GO AND MOVE ON

There's always something special about the act of releasing balloons, isn't it?

In *Up*, I see the balloons as something Fredricksen held onto dearly after the demise of his beloved wife. He was obviously still grieving Ellie's death and lamenting a promise he didn't fulfill – for her to visit Paradise Falls.

Eventually, Fredricksen learnt to release his grief by first lightening the load of the house when he wanted to save Russell who decided to save Kevin on his own.

Fredricksen made further progress later when he was able to release his house with all the remaining balloons after saving his other three friends from the clutches of hero-to-zero Muntz.

Russell: *Sorry about your house, Mr. Fredricksen.*
Fredricksen: *You know, it's just a house.*

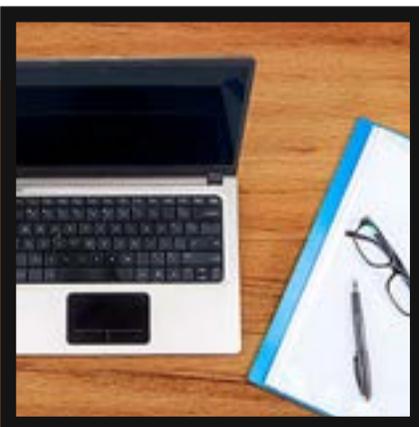
No matter the setbacks you have encountered personally and in your workplace, keep in mind that things happen for a season and for a reason.

Perhaps you've recently been made redundant because of an organisational restructure. In this case, stop asking "why" it happened, but ask "how" to move on from here.

By releasing the "baggage" that's holding you back, you become "lighter", and things become clearer for you to move on to the next adventure in your career.

I quote what Ellie wrote in her scrapbook for Fredricksen before she passed on: "Thanks for the adventure – now go have a new one!"

■ *Honestly, Lay Hsuan cannot remember the last movie she actually watched in the cinema. She will try to catch up on good movies soon. For more reel lessons, visit www.leaderonomics.com*



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