



## **THE DISTELFINK – They’re Still Watching**

November 2, 2009

Okay, so we know that children are watching us at home, and we’ve gotten a glimmer as to what they see. What about the workplace? How do our approaches to working – how often, how long and how intensely, or not - rub off on our kids?

Today, we as parents, have many different ways to work. Some of us work in shifts; some of us have long summer vacations; some of us work in trains, planes, automobiles and hotels afar; some of us work from home and stay in our pajamas until Noon. Some of us can leave our responsibilities at work, while others bring home loose ends that need to be tied up later at night or early in the morning. For better or for worse, our children see how all this impacts us, and how it affects our stress levels or feelings of accomplishment. They notice whether we complain about our boss and co-workers, or whether we really like what we do and those around us. They observe loyalty, job-hopping and lay-offs. They see if we take extra courses, or pursue advanced degrees to better ourselves, or simply lament about opportunities that have passed us by.

I learned my work ethic from my Father. No surprises there to those of you who have been reading my stuff for a while. My Dad worked sixty hours a week, usually including one weekend day, for close to sixty years. And he loved it! As a child I rarely saw him, and I have no recollection of his ever coming to my school games or skating competitions. He provided unwaveringly for my sisters and me though – our educations, our camps, our everyday needs (and a fair amount of wants too!), but we didn’t know him. It took until we were in our 20’s, after college, that we really started to appreciate our Father. And then, my, how we did.

For the first twenty years of my career, I followed my Father’s lead. I worked hard for my employers, I worked hard for my clients, and I worked hard because making a difference to these two constituents felt so good. But where did my family fit in? Unfortunately, it didn’t. I was also trying to escape from a bad marriage by avoiding my spouse at the time, and I didn’t know my children. Divorce became the inevitable route, and then the true life juggle began. I had to provide for my household, and yet there never seemed to be enough time to help with homework, attend athletic events or simply hang out and watch TV together. Commuting, work related travel, and just plain work, still took a ton of time. I am grateful to two employers though who permitted some work from home, but this was at the time the Blackberry was coming into vogue, and my children didn’t like it, not one bit. (Fast forward five years and witness how tethered to their phones and texting they have become. Oooops, who were they watching?)

Having my own advisory practice for the past two years has been glorious - chaotic and confusing at times - but mostly glorious. My days are one huge mélange of work, kids, household and personal activities – and I love it this way. By no means do I have it all figured out yet, but I know I’m closer to being able to be the kind of parent my kids need me to be for them, and I want to be for my kids. They are calmer, more settled and easier to talk to. They share their goals and

aspirations, and they take responsibility for what's important at this stage in their lives – striving to do well in school, being a good teammate, and caring about their friends.

And how do they see me now? Still as someone who works a lot of hours, does a lot of writing and who cares deeply about making a difference with clients and their families. They know I am proud of my work and that I love what I do. But they also know my life is no longer an either/or. I'm not waiting to get to know my children until they have graduated from college. I'm not waiting to hold hands with my husband as we take our dogs for a walk on a beautiful autumn day. And I'm not watching the clock when a Friday lunch with the girls slips into a considerably longer outing than originally planned. Life is good. And working hard is good. I want my children to see that they can have both someday.

More to come...

Copyright ©2009 Weightman Wealth Advisory. All rights reserved.