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PO Box 19577
RPO Manulife Centre
Toronto, ON M4W 3T9
<http://www.ambeck.com>

Interview With Rodger Harding

What's a typical day like for you?

I start the day at 6:00 am with several cups of coffee, until its recent demise, enjoyed along with the wonderfully structured chaos of Tom Allen's *Music & Company* (CBC 2);

I consciously take stock of being alive, my good fortune and what needs to be done that day; I tackle pressing or unpleasant tasks first, ready the office for any clients that might be due; prepare for out of office seminars; before day's end, I ensure all paperwork/materials are ready for the next day;

I intersperse routine with personal e-mails, answering calls, a short walk or even an out of office pleasurable activity;

No two days are ever the same!

About Rodger Harding

For more than a decade Rodger Harding's Toronto based Business Leadership Consultancy has provided high level consulting, training & keynote speaking services to diverse corporate, government and not-for-profit clients. His skill-set has evolved over almost three decades in an international career that spans, Law, Diplomacy and Business Consulting

Rodger is passionate about his role in assisting individuals and organizations to fully invest innate/learned competencies & experience to full advantage. He believes this investment, in a fulfilling and like-minded environment, will secure ongoing professional evolution and personal happiness.

www.HardingIntl.com

How do you motivate yourself and stay motivated?

I am usually demotivated when bored, so the pursuit of a pleasurable or useful activity, paid or unpaid, usually gets me going. Like-minded sharing of ideas is perhaps the most stimulating way I know to get going - I have built up quite a vibrant circle of people who get each other! Many tell me that I am an intense individual - I guess finding people to share intensity with does it for me!

If you had to start over from scratch, knowing what you know now, what would you do differently?

I would not change much!

However, If I had my time over, I would place more importance on physically related activities...As the years pass I somehow feel/know that I did not make the most of my physical attributes;

I was an awkward, clumsy child who believed himself incapable of dexterity and without detail orientation. I have learned that while my preference is for the broader, creative strokes, I am fully able to function in high detailed environments. I must add though that I prefer my own process structures to those of others....

Necessity taught me late in life that if I slowed my thinking down...many things physical became possible....

Also...I was far too serious in my youth....I regret not burning the candle at both ends ...I am making up for it now....Like a *baba cool* as the French would say...

What's the most important discovery you've made in the past year?

I am definitely on the right track professionally. Some 10 years ago I decided to work only with individuals/companies that are a good fit - Many advised that this was the path to ruin - I now know that, given my personality, methodology and experience this was the right choice

What do you observe most people in your field doing badly that you think you do well?

I prefer to work on a subjective basis with clients, marrying their circumstance/requirements to objective market/industry/workplace realities; I have a strong aversion to labels, profiling and template driven training;

To reach other people requires a degree of risk ... I believe I take those risks
Recognizing, understanding and acknowledging the individuality of others is the greatest validation I can provide!

Describe a business challenge you had and how you resolved it.

As a small business operator, immersion in tasks/deliverables is often at the expense of new business development; this results in frequent cash flow challenges;

To continue working toward my own priorities in the hands-on fashion I love, the pursuit of like-minded clients has resulted in a constant, albeit erratic, flow of referrals;

People who believe in me have helped out ...without being asked! This is perhaps one of the most gratifying aspects of my life - I have somehow earned the confidence and respect of people who believe that it is important that I continue my work.....

What lessons did you learn in the process?

- It is OK to graciously receive - I had always thought it was my role to be a giver... Learning to receive, has taught me how better to give!
- I have tailored my life style to accommodate my business ethic
- I can live happily on considerably less than I was used to - Compared to my upbringing and former diplomatic life, I have no status, fewer assets and no power base, yet am happier and a far more useful member of society than ever before...

Tell me about your big break and who gave you.

There have been many! All involved random relationships that blossomed into good business deals;

Example: Soon after starting my business, I was invited to participate in a live call-in television program. A young woman, Emelia Prempeh, later called my office and asked for advice, which I freely gave. A year later she hired me to provide career guidance sessions for graduating classes at the Information Technology Institute - then a vibrant IT college that specialized in training diverse professionals and academic graduates into IT experts. I almost refused the opportunity as the compensation was way below market worth, yet my relationship with Emelia prompted me to accept - - Interaction with some 1700 people has been a vast business and personal resource that persist to this day. The 4 year experience made conscious my theory of what constitutes human excellence. I can honestly say that confidence in my unique approach to empowering others had its foundation in the intensity of the 1700 validating interactions experienced;

Describe one of your biggest failures. What lessons did you learn, and how did it contribute to a greater success?

Immigrating to Canada aged 40 proved a tough reality; I found myself (or so I thought at the time) unemployable, and totally without a support network. The currency exchange rate meant that I was suddenly worth 80% less than previously;

This situation prompted me to start my own business. The experience taught me that I was a good entrepreneur, I could make it on my own; I no-longer needed hand-holding...

Using who I am everyday, with or without compensation, brings untold joy;

My self-esteem and confidence are greatly enhanced. I had considered myself fairly evolved without much more to learn when I came to Canada - I was wrong! Lessons learned have awakened me to my own worth...and where true happiness and fulfillment lie!

What has been your biggest disappointment in your life - and what are you doing to prevent its reoccurrence?

My intensity in interactions with others is not always easy for them to bear; while I am loved by many I tend to overwhelm/exhaust people if I see them too often; I am learning to measure my input, but do feel that high energy defines me - I am not really ready to water it down or to dim the lights for easy acceptance - The quest for people who are equally *high octane* continues; I have also accepted that my emotional fulfillment does not reside in any one person...rather in a mosaic of special relationships that have endured for years;

What's one of the toughest decisions you've had to make and how did it impact your life?

That being myself will not always be the easiest route. Many see this aspect of me as arrogance/attitude, yet despite my self-consciousness, lack of confidence etc. something deep inside has always refused to go with the flow for the sake of an easier ride....

How did mentors influence your life?

Mentors have held up the mirror and shown me potential I did not know I had...Oftentimes I only realized the enormity of their contribution years later...

What's one core message you received from your mentors?

That I am a gifted person who has loads of untapped potential...Using this potential will benefit myself and others

How do you integrate your personal and professional life?

I have never separated the two - Yet I am able to distinguish the two when interaction with others demands prioritization, but believe who I am personally impacts professionally...the opposite is also true!

What's a major regret that you've had in life?

I was not a carefree person in my youth;

What are five life lessons that you have learned so far?

- Actively acknowledge, with gratitude, all that is right in my life on all levels
- Attempt to resist comparing myself with others
- Get off centre-stage - My insignificance sets me free, while at the same time I am accountable to my talents, innate and learned
- I am accountable to my personal/professional impact with its mix of perfection/imperfection - I am in total awe of the magnificence of the individual mind and its potential
- Happily pay the price for choices made - Surrender to what I do not/cannot understand is vital moving forward

When you have some down time, how do you spend it?

- Daydreaming - Lost in random thought, most of my *Eureka* moments have come unbidden.....!
- If I am at all organized or efficient, it is because I love getting tasks done so I can indulge in this pastime. I used to think it was *doing nothing*, until I realized that I am actually sub-consciously mulling over the next article, painting, consulting session, seminar, keynote...This

perhaps accounts for my ability to get going at the drop of a hat; I am often called to deliver last minute key-notes or to write opinions on diverse subjects without time to research or prepare...

For me, daydreams are actually creative spadework!

- I have recently started painting and have done surprisingly well. My canvases, all painted without a sale in mind, fetch decent prices;
- I love reading...especially novels
- Gardening & cooking are both creative passions
- Importantly ...just chatting with friends about everything and nothing

What process do you use to generate great ideas?

As above...I *let go* completely to take the pressure off myself; I tell myself no-one in particular is waiting for my great idea - and that the world will be just fine without it. This allows me to let new ideas in without concern for outcomes...

How do you define success?

Being able to live with myself; If find myself ready to pass on at any particular moment, then at that moment I consider myself a success;

In your opinion what's the formula for success?

Being who I am rather than who I am expected to be!

This involves:

- Fully utilizing innate & learned ability
- Achieving a high degree of pleasure/happiness
- Accommodation (acceptance) in a like-minded environment
- Adequate means of survival
- The ongoing opportunity to evolve to my fullest potential....

What does it take to succeed in your field?

To bring the message above to as many people as possible

Which one book had a profound impact on your life?

David Copperfield, (Charles Dickens) - I first heard this book serialized on the radio aged 9. I read the book aged 10 and still find it an inspiration. The exploration of family life, friendship, love, hardship, death, human greatness/imperfection, as well as personal evolution encompasses just about every human emotion ...

If you were stranded on a deserted island, what are five books that you would like to have with you and why? Give a brief summary of each book

- David Copperfield - Charles Dickens (Human emotion)
- Women in Love - D.H. Lawrence (Embracing paradox brings enlightenment)
- Any Ian McEwan novel (A single action can alter the course of events)
- Any John Irving novel (Imperfection in itself can be perfection)
- Road to Greco - Nikos Kazantzakis (The path of individual evolution)
- Quatrefoil - James Barr (The importance of persistence and integrity in relationships)

**If you had a personal genie and she gave you one wish, what would you wish for?
Or, if I gave you a magic wand, what would you use it for?**

To ask for happiness and fulfillment!

Complete the following, I am happy when.....

- I am fully engaged in activity that uses all of me/I am a useful member of society
- Using who I am brings pleasure to myself and others
- I have secured a like-minded circle of interaction
- I am able to support myself
- I am able to continue the process of evolution

For more ideas, and if you love stories, read the responses of the 34 people profiled in *Tales of People Who Get It* <http://stores.lulu.com/store.php?fAcctID=670937>.

Be sure to check out Avil Beckford's website at <http://www.ambeck.com>

Check out Ambeck Edge newsletter archive at <http://www.ambeck.com/resources.html>