



Stakeholders:

Who is going to help you change?



In high school, I remember wanting to stop the reckless and unproductive behaviors I was engaged in. I had a desire to get serious about my career and life. I had defaulted to typical adolescent activities and as I approached graduation I was very nervous about my future. The desire to change started deep within. During the fall of my junior year, I made some bold claims and those goals slowly grew into a public shift. I have no idea how I pulled it off, but by the time I was a freshman in college I had radically modified my values and behaviors.

Looking back, there were three distinct steps I intuitively took that played a major role in making these successful changes. The first was my deep conviction and desire to be a better man. The second was my curiosity for learning. I started reading about people who made life changes and researched ways I could do the same. The third and most challenging step was to encircle myself with new friends. I made a decision to hang out with more mature kids that would support my desire to be different. In a sense, they held me accountable for the new me. Now as an adult with professional training, I have discovered that human nature demands that we live accountable to one another.

The alternative is clearly demonstrated by crime rates, mental and emotional problems, immorality, and existential confusion. People living in isolation and without accountability are prone to unstable and unproductive lives. *McKinley Leadership* developed a coaching structure that attends to this universal need for community. We call it our Stakeholder program. By definition a stakeholder is someone who has a share or an interest in what you or the organization is doing. This person stands to gain or lose personal advantage when you succeed or fail. The concept is said to be credited to an American philosopher named R. Edward Freeman who is a Professor of Business Administration at the Darden School - University of Virginia. Further, he is credited for his work on stakeholder theory and business ethics. Marshall Goldsmith is a renowned leadership coach and has written a book and several articles about this concept. Clearly the stakeholder concept is not new, but applied in the coaching context definitely provides an advantage.

When was the last time you wanted to change something in the way you did life?

We need stakeholders because no real and permanent change exists outside of relationships. I call this change rule the Law of Wilson. This law is demonstrated in the movie *Cast Away*. Tom Hanks, playing a character stranded on an island following a plane crash, finds himself all alone. He invents a surrogate friend with a remaining item from the crash, a volleyball. It has the brand name Wilson on it and he spontaneously names the ball Wilson. The relationship that Hanks develops with this volleyball is indicative of the human struggle to be in community with people. He needed the interaction (invented or real) to develop the courage to face his hardships and pass the time.

The bottom line is that people need people to interact with in order to grow and change. The coaching question that most haunts The McKinley Leadership clients when asked is: Who is going to help you? This question sends our clients into a frantic search for names of people they trust, are vulnerable with, care about, and believe would be willing to invest time in their development. This is a moment of truth for most people. Who is going to help me? Without the support of colleagues and a community of friends, no real and permanent change will occur and/or be sustainable.

McKinley Leadership provides a framework for building this support system before our clients attempt courageous changes in their lives. This unique TMG Stakeholder program was structured to ensure the success of TMG clients. The program requires all coaching clients to select three individuals to serve as stakeholders for their coaching goals. Once established, the goals are shared with the stakeholders and their role is to support the client in achieving those written goals. McKinley Leadership maintains that with a successful stakeholder program, along with keeping consistent coaching appointments and 95% completion of homework, leaders will produce the desired changes they seek and in turn reach their goals.

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