



Are You an Addict?

By Tony Smith

First of all, the answer is probably yes. We are all addicted to something. I'm not talking about drugs or alcohol or gambling. Those addictions get a lot of press, but aren't nearly as widespread as what I'm talking about.

Everyone knows that it's human nature to dislike, be uncomfortable by – or worse yet – be afraid of CHANGE. Change brings about the unknown. Change is hard work ... affecting it, getting used to it, sustaining it. Even good changes ... sometimes especially good changes are resisted and abandoned by human nature. If they weren't, every New Year's resolution we ever made would stick. More than 6% of smokers would remain smoke-free when they quit. And we'd never hear the statistic that 92% of all dieters gain the weight back and then some.

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That said, there is something that tempts and woos us as much as any drug. It is comfortable. It is seductive. It is the PAST.

Most people live in the past. And when faced with opportunity (which falls into the CHANGE category), the past can be quite seductive. It's difficult to resist. After a while, people often ignore Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" advice and give in to the past.

Like any addiction, admitting the problem is half the battle. So embrace this premise: Being addicted to the past is being addicted to patterns that don't work. That's an important concept to internalize. True leaders

are aware of this tendency, and they know when they are being seduced by the past.

Put the past in its place

Look, it's not your fault. We are trained from a young age to use the past when making any future decisions. And to some extent, this works. Knowing the past does help you manage the future. But just incrementally. If you use what you already know to make future decisions, all you will get is the same result as the past, plus or minus an increment. Basically, you're gonna get what you already got.

If you want a departure from the results you've always gotten ... if you want a breakthrough future, you need to invent it. You have to lead from the future to the present. The past doesn't inspire you, it informs you.

I coach company leaders on something called transformational leadership. I help leaders transform their businesses with breakthrough thinking. By leading from the future into the present, a transformational leader can create possibilities for their organization, then inspire action from the appropriate people.

The leader makes a declaration of something that doesn't yet exist. Then he works backward to the present and figures out, with his people, how to create it, make it happen.

Putting a man on the moon

Here's an example you may remember: In September of 1962, President John F. Kennedy made a declaration. He said that the United States would have a man on the

moon – and bring him home safely – by the end of the decade. Here's an excerpt from that speech:



"We have given this program a high priority – even though I realize that this is in some measure an act of faith and vision, for we do not now know what benefits await us.

"But if I were to say, my fellow citizens, that we shall send a man to the moon, 240,000 miles away from control station in Houston, in a giant rocket more than 300 feet tall, made of new metal alloys, some of which have not yet been invented, capable of standing heat and stresses several times more than we have ever experienced, fitted together with a precision better than the finest watch, carrying all the equipment needed for propulsion, guidance, control, communications, food and survival, on an untried mission, to an unknown celestial body, and then return it safely to earth, re-entering the atmosphere at speeds of over 25,000 miles per hour, causing heat about half the temperature of the sun, and do all of this, and do it right, and do it before this decade is out, then we must be bold."

Now, to many, this was an absurd notion. Incomprehensible. Can't be done ... especially in eight years or less! But the President made a declaration. He was leading from the future. The next step was creating solutions to make it happen. He put it to the team of experts, who asked, "what's missing?"

- We need sheet metal that will withstand re-entry heat. That's what's missing. Let's do research. This is the beginning of a breakthrough.

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- We don't have the computer technology to navigate. What do we need? What's missing?
- We don't have the thrust fuel that the Russians have. Let's find out what they are doing.

We all know the outcome. In 1969, America put a man on the

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moon. How did that happen? The President took a stand for a possibility. He made a declaration. And then he inspired his team to find the answers.

Stars, leaders and coaches

In the world, there are stars, leaders and coaches. The stars have "got it" ... they have access to the future, but they don't realize it. Leaders, good leaders, have access to the future and inspire the stars to work for the benefit of the group. I'm a coach. I recognize the ability for leaders and stars to achieve breakthrough results, and I help them get there.

Are you a transformational leader? Here is my advice to you: Do not succumb to the seduction of the past. Lead from the future. Realize the possibilities and make a declaration (even if it sounds absurd). Then inspire your team to achieve breakthrough results.

Remember, the past has its place. We are informed by the past. We are accountable for the past. But we are not derived by it. All your success lies in the future. Find it. Declare it. Create it. ▶

An exercise for the future

If you are serious about trying this concept, do this exercise.

- Sit down with pen and paper and brainstorm. Ask yourself, "What is possible — and not predictable — in the next five years?"

- Write down everything that occurs to you (again, even if it seems absurd). There are no negatives in this exercise. If you start second guessing ("But that's never been done" or "That will never work"), you are being seduced by the past. Keep your thinking in the future.

- Choose the top one or two things you would most like to happen.
- Then start the "what's missing?" process. Determine what events, decisions and circumstances would have to happen to achieve your goal.
- Bring your team in. Allow "what's missing?" questions, but dismiss all negative past-oriented thinking.
- Once the details are roughed out, begin making a task list. The future is yours. Make it happen!