

# *Age Quod Agis*

*(Ah'-jay Quod Ah'-gis)*

*“Do What You Are Doing”*

*The  
Management  
Principles  
of  
Ignatius  
of  
Loyola*

**Brother Manuductor**

## *Foreword*

In the early part of the Sixteenth Century, Inigo de Loyola, known to us as Ignatius of Loyola, after an impassioned military career and a profound religious conversion, formed a group of like-minded men, named simply the Company of Jesus, known to us now as the Society of Jesus or the Jesuits.

There has been, and is, quite simply, no group quite like them. Intelligent, disciplined, maligned, suppressed, expelled, revered, reviled, martyred, they nonetheless were and are the most focused and forceful religious group in the Church.

“Focus” may seem almost to be an inappropriate word to apply to the work of the Jesuits. They are high school and college teachers, pastors, missionaries, scientists (astronomers, physicists, doctors), lawyers, PhDs, MBAs, JDs. As one Jesuit, a paratrooper who actually jumped with his men said: “If there are men crazy enough to jump out of airplane, they ought to have a Jesuit go with them.”

What focus they have is clearly not in the activities themselves. The focus must be an inward one. And it must be compelling. In addition, it must be so reality-based that it is supremely adaptable and as applicable today as it was centuries ago and as true in application in the inner cities of America and at her universities as it is in the heat of Africa and the mystery of China.

There is, in the typical Jesuit, a love of integrity and a oneness of thought and action that is admirable. One Jesuit, a theologian and philosopher by trade, was fond of reminding his students: “If you don’t live as you think, you’ll end up thinking as you live.” No room in this man’s life for wishy-washiness or for weak compliant behavior.

There are books that have detailed Jesuit training and attitude: Men Astutely Trained, Obedient Men and The Jesuits among them. The purpose of this book is not to examine the Jesuits themselves but to extract, as laymen, a few of the guiding principles, the underlying focus, that make the Jesuit a Jesuit. They are not only distinctive, they have immediate and important application to business and, indeed, to life.

Ignatius collected a tough-minded and independent group of men about him. A number, himself included, were Basques -- as fiery then as they are now and as defiantly independent. He himself was a soldier and a brave one at that. His Company was not based on his personal charisma, unlike, say, the followers of Francis of Assisi, who wanted to be like Francis. From the first, Ignatius had rules: guiding behavior so that the members of the Company would think as they lived and would live as they thought.

The first rules the Jesuits were the Common Rules: *Regulae Communes*. As new situations presented themselves, other sets of rules were written. You could almost imagine a group of Jesuits, priests, let's say, asking: "Any special thoughts for us, Father Ignatius?", and from his guiding hands came such as the Rules for Priests (*Regulae Sacerdotum*). And so there were rules for scholastics, confessors, those taking a trip (*Iter Facientium*) and the like. Special applications of common principles for special situations. They were the more important in the Society because it was (is) not a monastic order but rather a group who live in a community when available but whose members spend their lives out and among people at large.

There are organizations today that tout their teamwork. But there are at least two forms this teamwork might take. First, there's the team and teamwork that unites a hierarchy. What the boss or those in authority say is prime. Playing as a team member means falling in line and following the leader. Outwardly, a great team: they all speak and say and do the

same, marching in the same direction. The rules are simple: do what you are told; don't step out of line; loyalty will be rewarded.

Then there's the team of volunteers, the team formed by subscription to a common purpose. It is interesting that this team, where "freedom" of the individual reigns, has the most rules and laws. These are the best ways to harness the energy of men's hearts to a common task.

Ignatius' team was of the latter. As another Jesuit said: "Strong horses need strong reins".

In the competitive world we live in, there is little place for the autocratic and authoritarian form of teamwork. Rather, the team that can play competitively is the team based on internalized strategy, on empowered response, on a strong and realistic framework of action.

In this thin book, I'll outline a few of the relevant directives of a Master of Management, Ignatius of Loyola. Many of the Rules and prescriptives are available in Latin. Where so, I have included the Latin for authenticity but I provide a translation. I will offer only those rules that I found directly applicable to business.

His guiding principles are as effective today as they were when he wrote them. They bring the added security of the test of time: they have worked with a unique and fervent group of men for hundreds of years.

Instead of the expected chapter designation, I'll use an Ignatian word: Point. In Latin, *Punctum*, the plural of which is *Puncta*. Points. For any meditation period, as during the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius would offer "points" for the meditator to contemplate. He was very "real", Ignatius was, offering many of his points in ways that would involve the senses: asking the meditator to "see" this, and "hear" that. (More on this later.) The end result was a set-up for a complete experience of

whatever it was one was invited to meditate on. My thoughts are set forth as “points” – things for the reader, hopefully, to think about and dwell on a bit. If they pass the muster of your own experience - if they ring true - then use them. My hope is that the beguiling simplicity of Ignatius’ wisdom will work for you, even as it worked for me.

My first introduction to the Rules, as to the whole of Jesuit life and spirituality, came predominantly from one man, our Master of Novices, Martin J. Neylon, S.J. In Latin “Master” is “*Magister*” and we, his Novices, referred to him most often and rather playfully simply as “the Mag”. The Mag went on to become the Bishop of the Caroline and Marshall Islands. To the day he died, he was to us all a model in life as he was in word.

As in any organization, there were certain roles that were assigned and rotated every six months or so. One of them was the role of the *Manuductor*, Latin for “Leader by the hand”, a playful exaggeration of the role of a particular lowly novice! The *Manuductor*, aka “the Duck”, was one of two Novices allowed to wear a watch (the other was the *Sub-Manuductor*, or “Sub-Duck”) and his main tasks were to sound the bell at the beginning of a new duty, to post the order of the day, to record in a ledger, in Latin, the special occurrences of the day, and, on occasion, to be a sounding board for the Master. It was a position I held for six months in 1960, and it afforded me the enhanced time of learning that came from listening to the Master think aloud. It is to the Master, Martin Neylon, S.J., that I dedicate this simple work. What he taught me and us worked not only for being a member of the Society, it worked for all of us as members of society in general.



St Ignatius Loyola

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## ***Point One***

### **Focused Dedication**

*Singuli praefinitum sibi tempus suae conscientiae bis  
cotidies examinandae ...*

Regulae Communes, 1.

Twice daily, each person should set aside the time to  
examine his conscience ...

Ignatius was totally goal oriented. Large goals were broken down into smaller goals and pursued relentlessly. Each day's purpose was linked to larger purposes and all the minutiae of the day were, in turn, linked to the larger framework.

He instructed his Company to stop whatever they were doing twice each day to examine the what, why and how of the day's activity. It is so easy to get caught up in doing. Particularly now with the enormous pressure to produce. The “activity trap” rearranges priorities if not checked: activity can outweigh purpose and *doing* in almost any visible form is often rated more highly than *thinking*.

So Ignatius had his people stop now and again to ask questions like: *Where did I plan to go today? Am I getting there? What could I have done differently or better? How should I redirect my energies? And, What is the purpose behind all of this?*

A result: A mid-day course assessment and correction, an end of day analysis and refinement, and thoughtful preparation for the morrow.

Lying underneath: the mandates of one's personal or corporate strategic plan. The result? Perfect alignment of goals and actions, and meaningful activity.

## ***Point Two***

### **Learning Another Language**

*Ad maiorem unionem eorum qui in Societate vivunt, maiusque auxilium apud quos habitant, singuli addiscant eius regionis linguam in qua resident, nisi forte ipsorum nativa illic esset utilior ...*  
Regulae Communes, 10.

For the greater union of those living in the Society, and even more so to help those among whom they are working, everyone should learn the language of the location in which they live, unless perchance their own native tongue is more useful.

What an international attitude and savvy! And one in which our country has sadly gone astray. In our economic haughtiness, we've by and large decided the world should do it our way: English, American-style! "It's good for them," we justify.

Indeed, there are times and places when sharing a common language worldwide does unite us. More often than not, the *lingua franca* (so to speak) of the world's business is English. That's a *de facto*. But *forcing* English to be the common language, insisting that others wishing to speak with us speak only English, can be a mistake. True, it automatically gives us the perceived upper hand, keeping the conversation comfortably on our linguistic turf. No need for us to stumble for a word or to turn a phrase. Even though we stand on his own soil, the poor colleague from someplace else has learned English as best he can. But we have him at every twist and turn of nuance and idiom. How this contributes to our false sense of superiority! And yet, just try to imagine doing yourself what you force him to do, expressing your, say, 42-year-old

inspirations and understandings with the vocabulary of a six-year-old and with the accent of someone whose “ear” for the language was shaped in a high school course.

Imagine, instead, a company forging an internal union, where Americans posted to France, or Germans to the States, Brazilians to Argentina or Koreans to Japan, all learned the language of their host country.

Admittedly, most of us Americans may never so learn a foreign language that we can achieve perfect comfort in using it and with an accent acceptable to the listener's. We grew up surrounded almost exclusively with the sounds of that tongue we call “English” (though many an Englishman, the “owner” of the language, might cringe at what we pass off as English.) There is little opportunity and still less need in this vast country to do otherwise.

I was rather surprised to find another American, during a stint in the Philippines, who'd actually learned enough Tagalog to make his way unaccompanied into the original boonies, the boondocks, the “*bundok*,” as the mountains there are known. And how proudly sweet it was to meet one who was willing to face the humbling experience of trying to pronounce “*nga*.” He admitted that he felt that others looked at him as “the village idiot”. But he was more accepted, and more effective, because of his attempts to speak their language and his consequent vulnerability.

Ignatius stressed that you'd be better able to “help” or work with those speaking another language if you learn theirs.

So the world he contemplated was one of effectiveness and meaningful adaptation.

To be sure, we've given a great “gift” to many of our overseas commercial partners: the gift of English. But we have in the process frequently learned too little from and of them. Someday we may be the “beta” culture instead of the alpha. We'll face that time ill-prepared linguistically and

psychologically if we don't now learn to get off our linguistic high horse!

We should give ourselves the great gift of learning such of their language as we can, even though we and they may recognize that, at the present time, ours has a greater utility. As rich as our language is, there are so many experiences for which we have no ready English expression. My favorite over in the Philippines was the Tagalog word *alimuom*. It describes that wonderful smell that comes from asphalt and the earth after a thunderstorm passes. It took me years to discover that, yes, our language has a word for that smell: *geosmin*. (Not nearly as pretty a word as *alimuom*, I might note.) Most dictionaries don't even include the word because it's not that important to us. But to the Filipinos I knew there, the experience was always as delightful as a sunset or the smell of the sea to us, and I was happy to have a word to describe the experience to others.

Other languages and specific words or concepts or phrases can enrich the descriptions and appreciations of our experiences! They may add that, shall I say, *je ne sais quoi*, to the equation!

### ***Point Three***

#### **Open Doors**

*Nullus ita cubiculum suum claudat quin aperiri  
extrinsecus possit ...*  
Regulae Communes, 11.

No one should so close his cubicle that it can't be opened from the outside.

Ignatius' thought runs toward openness to the community rather than exclusive isolation.

There's relevance, to be sure, in the workplace in our concern with sexual harassment. Creating "the right place" – a locked and isolated office – puts us a third of the way there, needing only the right person and the right time for a problem to develop!

More often, however, there's the issue of management isolation. The inner sanctum of an office, protected by one or two intervening administrative stations, may indeed provide a confidential and contemplative retreat place. It may also keep the occupant from hearing the cries of the "wounded" and the pleas of the needy!

Oneness in purpose suggests oneness in proximity. The "open door" policy that many intelligent and competitive firms have is what Ignatius suggested hundreds of years ago.

## ***Point Four***

### **A Level Playing Ground**

*Singuli, etiam si sacerdotes sunt, mane lectum et reliqua component, et cubiculum mudent bis saltem in hebdomeda ...*

Regulae Communes, 16.

Everyone, even priests, should put away their things every morning and clean their cubicle at least twice a week.

This is a strange offering, perhaps, for a management book! But look at what Ignatius wanted to accomplish:

1. An egalitarian statement saying there are no gods, that straightening up the conference table after a meeting isn't just for peons and low-life. We are in this together.
2. A clean and uncluttered workplace reflects a clean and uncluttered mind.

Nice attitude! Nothing to do with the company should be “below” the leadership of that company. This is a lesson that Southwest Airlines has learned well. Their pilots will help load luggage to keep the flight on schedule.

## ***Point Five***

### **Continuous Improvement**

*Quid magis, Domine?  
Ad majorem Dei gloriam.*

What more, Lord?  
To the greater glory of God.

For secular reasons, we must consider the phrases without the references to the Lord God.

What we see here is the original continuous improvement man. The one who always asks: what more and how better. It's the comparatives that drive it. More and greater.

The “*quid magis?*” is tricky. It could sound, translated, akin to “what’s *next*”. But it is in reality much closer to “what thing bigger?” or “what thing greater” than what our word “more” usually connotes. It is the expansion of the present reality into something better. And it is an attitude of one to whom enough or good enough is never enough or good enough.

So, too, with the “greater” glory. Not just the exalted and static “great” glory, but *greater* glory. Feel the surge of intention and of desire going beyond whatever frontier now exists!

Imagine, and especially in the driving context of executing your strategic plan, you and all your people were continually to ask: *Quid magis?!*

## ***Point Six***

### **Going for the Truth**

*Omnes demissa voce, ut religiosos decent, loquantur, nullusque cum alio contendat; sed, si qua in re nobis est diversa sententia eaque videtur manifestanda, rationes modeste et cum caritate afferantur, eo animo ut suus veritati sit locus, not ut in ea re superiores videantur. RC, 26.*

As befits religious people, everyone should speak in a lowered voice and they should not contend with each other. Insofar as there are diverse thoughts to be brought up, the reasons should be offered modestly and with charity, with the focus on the truth of the matter, not on appearing to be superior.

Alright, “as befits religious people” doesn’t have a direct application, but it is part of the rule. But look at the underlying respect that’s there! No shouting, no contentiousness!

Ignatius' rule recognizes there may be different viewpoints but he urges that they be expressed modestly and with charity. And more importantly, with an eye for the truth rather than just winning the point and seeming to be the victor.

This goes against the popular wisdom that winning is the only thing, where dominance and authority are more important as corporate survival factors than dedication to truth.

Try to grasp the enormous open-mindedness, the true openness, required to pursue the truth more than winning! Isn't it sadly

all too often the case that the one who “wins” a disagreement is the corporate superior, defined as the one in power, the relative “alpha”, particularly the one who has the power of termination. Might does, unfortunately, appear to make right.

When dissension is not allowed, when contrary opinions are stomped on (“You are not a team player!”), when the “wisdom” of superiors is celebrated and they are not allowed to “lose” (i.e., they are not “allowed” to pursue the locus of truth), when the “losers” vote with their feet by leaving the organization, when eyebrows are raised at the brash newcomer who dares challenge the decision of his elders, you are looking at an organization that will surely die.

There are whole business cultures where challenging authority means an individual’s corporate demise.

And here’s Ignatius, telling his *proteges* to keep their voices down and to go for the truth not just for victory.

## *Point Seven*

### **Taking a Break**

*Ultra duas horas nemo aut legendo aut scribendo  
labori incumbat quin studium intermittat aliquantulo  
temporis intervallo. RS, 12.*

No one should continue reading or writing for more than two hours without taking a small break.

Boy, did he ever understand human nature and the length of our attention span! No mention here of having a cup of coffee, but totally consistent with Ignatius' emphasis on focus.

What he's saying is you need the break to gather yourself again. In that "interval", there's time to ask: Where have I been? Where am I now? Where do I want to go next?

I recall reading, perhaps in Bernard Lonergan's Insight, about the compelling power of an insight, of an idea, and how from a single "Ah ha!" moment can flow a page or even a book. The break Ignatius suggests allows for the storm of insight to regather, even as its first wave may have dissipated across the pages finished since the prior break.

Try it. But make it an Ignatian break. Not just a brief stoppage of work but a meaningful interruption and refocusing: "Okay. Let me check again my purpose. What have I accomplished so far? Am I heading where I want to head? How best can I get there?"

Perhaps a coffee will still be in line. But then press on!

## ***Point Eight***

### **Full Disclosure**

*Si cui a Superiore denegatum aliquid fuerit, alium Superiorem ne adeat super ea re, quin ei aperiat quid sibi ab alio fuerit responsum, et quas ob causas negatum. RC, 21.*

If something has been turned down by one Superior, don't bring the matter to another Superior without being open about what was the first's response and the reasons for it.

What Ignatius is saying here is no over-the-top end-runs without full disclosure of what went before. We'll call it Ignatian disclosure.

There's no harm, oftentimes, in seeking a second opinion from someone higher in the corporate hierarchy. But being open and disclosing about what's gone before, that's the ticket to effectiveness and fairness.

It's also the ticket to good listening!

If you have to share the initial turn down and repeat the reasons for it, you just might feel the tickle of why it might not be the best idea in the world, and what might be a better approach.

With the new superior fully informed, you're also starting out at a higher place and you've given the new guy all he needs to know to answer you, and to deal effectively with the situation in case he happens to agree with your thought.

## *Point Nine*

### **Total Attention Shift**

*Signo campanae constitutis horis audito, omnes statim, vel imperfecta littera relictis, ad id ad quod vocantur se conferant.* CR, 13.

Hearing the sound of the bell, everyone, immediately, and even leaving the letter of the word unfinished, should turn to whatever he is called to.

Ignatius lived in a day without wristwatches. So “the bell” took its place, “announcing” the next duty of the Jesuit in training, the scholastic.

In the days of our Novitiate, only two novices had wristwatches. All others were free to do what they were doing (more on this later) without being dominated by the hands on a clock.

It is indeed easy to become dominated by “what time it is.” On the other hand, remember how intensely you immersed yourself in taking, say, the SAT, when you knew you’d be told, without looking at your watch, the exact moment when everyone, all together, would stop, put down the pencils, close the booklet and the task was over.

There are a couple of thoughts to go with this rule.

One is the ability to turn your focus totally from one activity to the next. He calls for a complete “withdrawal” – leaving even the letter of the word unfinished! – leaving the one task

hanging in meaningful and *dynamic* incompleteness, to turn fully to the next task.

A second is that dedication to organizational efficiency and that respect for others that says when the team has agreed to start a meeting at 10:00am, it'll start at 10:00am. Stop what you were doing and bring your entire focus to the new issue at hand.

This is not to advocate obsessive-compulsive type behavior. Nor are we saying we should emulate those who let the clock and a perhaps arbitrary segmentation of the agenda and time given to each topic totally rule over meaning. (How often ideas and creativity are stifled by the command of someone cutting off meaningful discussion because the second hand was in charge of the topic, not vice versa.)

Ignatius always intended that the writer would come back to the unfinished word! Practice with it a bit and you'll see how easy it becomes to return to the thought, to the very word, and to pick up energetically from where you stopped.

What he really was speaking of was to bring yourself, all of yourself, to the next task at hand.

And so he offers a way to answer the phone (an insistent intrusion that many find as annoying and distracting as a mosquito). He says, turn your attention fully to it!

I think of one senior partner on my old firm who was a master at this. It could be evident, for instance, that he was totally and intensely immersed in whatever it was he was writing. Nonetheless, at the knock on his door, he would completely stop where he was, put down his pen and turn with an expectant and welcoming smile to the "interrupter" – be it a staff person or another partner and say: "Come in!" You'd have the immediate feeling he was all yours: focused, attentive, all ears and mind. (Though he hadn't been a Jesuit, he had attended a Jesuit school!)

He always made you feel his time was yours. Though time was never wasted, there was always a moment for a quick and relevant story, a fresh and entertaining perspective. This is the way of Ignatian Focus. He was able to do what he was doing.

A friend, who excelled at this full-attention shift, carried the attitude over to prayer. He often noted: "Prayer is listening". He must have been outstanding at prayer, because he was an outstanding listener, always fully attentive to the full richness and nuances of the here and now.

## *Point Ten*

### **Focus and Commitment**

*Age quod agis.*

Do what you are doing.

This remarkably simple directive comes back to me time and time again. Just in time, as when I am in one of the mind frames that TS Eliot typified as “distracted from distraction by distraction,” with part of me going in one direction, another part in another. This is the state of dis-alignment, and from dis-alignment come both dissatisfaction and poor performance.

We live in a time when “multi-tasking” is a virtue. True, we all have likely enjoyed those magical moments of non-linear thinking and acting, when instead of proceeding logically from a to b to c and thence on to z on one project, we handle four or five projects at the same time, pushing this one down the pike a bit further, attending to that one for a moment, turning the interruption of a phone call into a productive moment. Sometimes it works, and it’s rather fun.

But most often, when we have not made the mental commitment to spend the time required and to apply the resources necessary to do something, we end up with a half-assed effort! When we say: “I’ll just take a look at this” rather than: “This will take me several hours” and then set the *mise en scene* of materials and resources needed to do it right – paper, a book, pencils, erasers, like that. And then focus. Free from distractions because we are mentally prepared to accomplish what it is we wish to accomplish. This is as true in dealing with physical activities (“I think I’ll go cut that dead

tree down”) as in mental. Doing things half-assed can get you into trouble real easily!

It was along these lines that our leader on an Outward Bound experience in Maine years ago counseled us before we left shore. “You’ll be asked, “ he said, “to do many things the next ten days that you may not like doing or feel like doing. I ask you to set your mind now that whatever is asked you *do it to do it, not to get through it.*” If he spoke Latin, undoubtedly he would have said, *age quod agis.*

It was close to the last day of our course before his counsel came back to me. We were told we had to clean out the bilge in the boat.

Imagine an open pulling and sailing boat, with floor boards, oars and benches and the “stuff” of fourteen of us squashed in duffel bags underneath.

Cleaning the bilge started by transferring all the “stuff” to just one side of the boat and lifting the floor boards. Only then could we begin scooping out the slimy water that had seeped through and mingled with all our droppings. Only when the water was out could we look realistically at the green and brown and black somewhat-living goop that clung to the hull and ribs. And only then were we given our scrubbing tools. Brushes! But not ordinary brushes – old toothbrushes. The best, we were told, for getting all the little things. I was on my knees between two of the ribs, going at first like the dickens to get from the left rib to the right – “my” part would be done.

The counsel came back to me: *Do it to do it, not to get through it.* And I slowed down and saw a bit more of the green gunk here and the brown there. Fully committed now to the task in all its dimensions, from the time it'd take to uncomfortable knees, two things happened. One, the job was done with quality. Two, satisfaction. I may even have smiled a bit.

*Age quod agis* was really the short-cut directive to quality and to satisfaction.

Until you get in the “*age quod*” habit, you might find it helpful to make a little sign for yourself. One of the name-tents we use at conferences would work just fine. Print on it: *Age quod agis*. And face it so you can see it. Then do it! The “Do what you’re doing” attitude is so liberating!

## *Point Eleven*

### **The Art of Persuasion**

In any conversation where we are trying to win a person over and ensnare him for the greater service of God our Lord, we should adopt the same procedure the enemy uses with a good soul – he always for evil and we always for good. The enemy enters through the other’s door by praising rather than contradicting his ways, he cultivates familiarity with the soul by drawing it to good and holy thoughts that bring the good soul calm. Then, little by little, he endeavors to come out his own door, drawing the person under the appearance of good to some harmful error or illusion, always for evil. In the same way, we, (acting) for good, can praise a person, go along with him on some particular good point, passing over in silence any bad points he may have. Once we have won his love, we will better get what we want. Thus, we go in his door and come out our own.

*Instruction letter of St Ignatius to Frs.  
Salmeron and Bruet on their way to  
Ireland.*

This is *so* Ignatian! He was, after all, a Basque, known for fire and relentless zeal. It’s what got him in trouble on the walls of Pamplona: the unwillingness to call it quits.

But as he got gentler with age and experience, he began, it seems, to realize something else. That the compliance of submission on the part of others isn’t quite the same as their seeing something in an entirely different light. You don’t win the game just by forcing others to obey or conform. You win the game by helping them understand.

To help them understand is first to listen to and appreciate the structures they use to build their thought and opinion-stance – of which cultural structures are the most subtle. You have to understand what would close their minds to reevaluation. You have to understand that there may be barriers to accepting the new message *and* the messenger. And only when you remove these barriers have you set the field for new understanding.

Not long ago, I saw the picture of the “brains” of Microsoft in 1978. A number of bearded, long haired, somewhat scruffy looking folks there! The question posed was whether you’d invest with these folks. Knowing where they’ve ended up, the answer is easy. But think of the barriers to your listening that might have been there those years ago!

Now that’s going in the opposite way. But let’s suppose you were one of those bearded folks, with a superior idea. And let’s also suppose that the people you wanted to talk with had the very thing you needed most to achieve your superior idea: capital! Is there a better way to talk with them? If you’d been following Ignatius’ prescription, which calls for simple accommodation (no substantial values are compromised!) that removes the barriers to listening. “Going in their door ...”

Years ago, I met a delightful college candidate interested in our tax practice. In due course toward the end of our interview (and I already knew I was going to invite him in to the office for further interviews) he confessed that he was wearing a wig. I had no idea. He told me that the summer before our interview, he’d grown in his hair. It came out to be what he called “a Polish Afro.” Importantly to him, the girls loved it and he wasn’t going to cut it off for an interview! His buddies all told him he’d never get a job presenting himself like that, so he offered to buy and wear a wig. He’d come in “my” door, for sure ... and he was just about to go out his: an invite to the office. When we finished chatting, and as if to underline it, he turned around in the doorway and with a huge grin he pulled off the wig. Out popped a mass of blonde curls, and he said charmingly: “My friends all accuse me of being a weekend

hippie. I tell them, I'm not a weekend hippie: I'm a weekday accountant." He and Ignatius would have understood each other just fine. In the Gospels, the translation might have been: render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's....

So often times we "play" within the structures of others. Those structures may be the way they think, the values they have, the culture they were raised in, the expectations they hold.

To be effective, you must know the structures within which you are playing.



*Microsoft Team, 1978*

## *Point Twelve*

### **The Routine Day as Liberating**

#### *De More*

##### According to Custom

The order of the following day went up on the Novitiate bulletin board every night. Order was big in the Jesuits and the habit of following the order was formed early in training. The most common daily pattern followed was the order called “*De More*.” It meant there was to be nothing out of the ordinary: no feast of note, no significant break in ordinary routine, just a day “according to custom”. The bells would go off at 5am ... a visit to the chapel ... meditation ... Mass ... breakfast ... housework, and so it would go.

At first blush, this might seem to be announcing a boring day. But, no, a “routine” day tended to create an environment for both absorptive reflection and for creativity.

Too often, we have no time to digest experience. We become so engaged in frenetic doing and envelope-pushing that the only time we have left for absorbing the happenings and processes of the day are the dreams we have at night. *De More* days allowed us to work on a couple of different levels. On the conscious level, there were the tasks of the moment, to which we struggled to give full and attentive dedication. (See *Age!*)

But circling around in back was the cloud of the unconscious, sort of like the dark matter and dark energy of the personal universe. Every now and again, an intersection of the two sparked a creative thought, an idea from seemingly nowhere,

and an understanding previously inaccessible. Routine became a condition for thinking.

At the end of the *De More* day, as at the end of every day, there was time once more for rounding it all up in the *Examen*. A review of the day takes only 15 minutes or so:

- √<sup>1</sup> what was planned,
- √<sup>1</sup> what was actually done;
- √<sup>1</sup> how well was it done;
- √<sup>1</sup> what could be done better;
- √<sup>1</sup> what needs to be addressed tomorrow.

The opening of a day shouldn't be a surprise, but a continuation and continuity of purpose.

Now and again, we should *plan* for a *De More* day. You'll find them to be the days when it all comes together.

## *Point Thirteen*

### **The Importance of Time**

#### *Tempus ad Libitum*

##### Free Time

In every *De More* day, there was a segment included called *Tempus ad Libitum*. Free Time in practical translation, and we referred to it simply as T-A-L.

What would appear to be the easiest and least demanding of all time allocations actually became the hardest, because it involved choices. No compelling have-tos, no assigned task or matters to focus on. The time was “free.” Read further in a book, write a letter home, look out the window, think.

It took some experience to realize that free time was not the same as nothing to do. The time management understanding formalized later in life came into play: *Time is life ... waste your time and you waste your life.*

Life always involves choices. Making conscious choices is so much better than just letting life happen. It reminds me of what was always stressed in learning how to fly a plane: situational awareness. This involved always being tuned in to everything in and around oneself: the integration of information from all the senses. Sounds, the feel of the yoke, the pressure of the seat, the sights above, below and all around you, inner attitudes, from tenseness to delight, the information offered by instruments, the intentionality of a destination. To be sure, these were not listed on a clip board, but they were all available as part of the experience of piloting. The more integrated they habitually became, the better you became as a pilot.

The Outward Bound program mentioned before offered three days of T-A-L as part of the course. Each person was loaned an island or section to spend all by him or herself.

My three days were spent on a small island named Little Brimstone in the Gulf of Maine. Besides 16 matches, a candy bar, a jug of water, a piece of plastic sheeting and a pencil and notebook, all I brought to the island was myself. No radio, no TV, no phone, no one else.

The question each of us, on our separate islands, had to figure out was whether we were comfortable with ourselves.

At the end of the experiment, when we were picked up and then shared experiences and thoughts, it became clear that some were and some were not. The latter, sadly, were almost terrified of being their own and only company. While withholding harsher judgment, it did make me wonder what it would be like to spend a day with them. "If you don't like you, why should I?" comes to mind.

The emptiness of some lives is indeed sad. It made me reflect on the other "inhabitants" of my island. There was a brown seagull. Just a youngster and not yet able to fly. Its parents bravely dive bombed me if I came too close. I didn't want to intrude, so I watched from a distance. Over on some sea-thrown rocks was the carcass of a seal. I sat and contemplated that for a while too. It was an island of life and of death. And the thought came, that death is the price we all pay for having life. For some, what they gave to and got out of life was so paltry that dying and death were indeed a terrible price to pay. For others, who lived richly in giving to life and taking from it all it had to offer, the price was indeed small.

We all pay the price. Living fully makes it a bargain. How we use of free time is a lesson to be learned. In the larger sense, it's all free time. We call it life.

## *Point Fourteen*

### **Ignatian Indifference**

Man was created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. The other things on the face of the earth were created for man's sake, and in order to aid him in the prosecution of the end for which he was created. Consequently, man ought to make use of them just so far as they help him to attain his end; he ought to withdraw himself from them just so far as they hinder him. It is therefore necessary that we make ourselves indifferent to all created things, in all that is left to the liberty of our free will and is not forbidden, so that we do not for our part wish for health rather than sickness, for wealth rather than poverty, for honor rather than dishonor, for a long life rather than a short one, and so in all other things, desiring and choosing only that which leads us more directly to the end for which we were created.

*The Spiritual Exercises, First Week, Principle and Foundation*

It is necessary to keep before my eyes the end for which I am created, which is to praise God our Lord and to save my soul; and at the same time to find myself indifferent, without any inordinate affection; so that I am not more inclined or disposed to take the thing proposed than to leave it, nor to leave it more than to take it; but that I find myself, as it were, exactly balanced, ready to follow that which I shall feel to be more for the glory and praise of God our Lord, and for the salvation of my soul.

*The Spiritual Exercises, Second Week, The Election*

Indifference is not an easy notion, and here it has been cast in a spiritual context, which may make acceptance a bit tougher. At the same time, the notion is so central to Ignatius' attitude that it is worth the time needed to understand it. To make acceptance easier, we have to change the context somewhat, and look at the underlying principles.

You'd have to know that the Spiritual Exercises were, indeed, exercises, lasting a month or so, where in silence and in intense recollection and guided examination, the Exercitant would seek to understand himself and his spiritual role and to commit himself to a life worthy of the great cause he would find himself part of. These exercises are muscle-building for the soul!

Typical of Ignatius, who never loses sight of the core reasons for anything, he starts with a relentless statement of goal-orientation. If you always know where you are going and why, you'll not easily lose your way.

So see, first, how Ignatius has suborned everything to the consuming acceptance of his life's purpose and goal. Once he has that in place, the indifference he describes is a total openness to whatever is. This is not passivity; this is not inactivity nor is it the fear of action. This is such a oneness with reality that it might simply be called love. Issues are not forced one way or the other, and the dancer and the dance are hardly separable.

We sometimes referred to the attitude as Ignatian detachment. I think it was because indifference, as a word, had the overtone of not caring. And not caring, as a life attitude, was so far from Ignatius' script. No this was rather the loving embrace of one who saw all as good. It was trust in the outcome.

Detachment is perhaps a better word: there is the connotation of openness as events of life unfold and the willingness to accept change. But also the suggestion that one isn't always in charge, and that "going with the flow" can be a remarkable strength.

Often, too often, we go for the security of certainty. But as a professor friend once quipped: “In this life, certainty is scary.” We do not write the script nor do we direct the play.

Think of Ignatian indifference as perfect balance. It is serene and meaningful acceptance of reality. It is the source behind the smile of the one who can face adversity with equanimity, set-backs with aplomb, changes with perspective.

But you have to start with the global goal of life-purpose that Ignatius had. What is your mission? What is your life purpose? Or as the pizza company asks: What do you want on your tombstone?

## ***Point Fifteen***

### **Don't Touch**

*... nemo alium, etiam ioco, tangat praeterquam in signum caritatis amplexando, cum quis aut abit aut redit peregre.*

Let no one touch another, even in jest, excepting the sign of charity by embrace with someone leaving on or returning from a journey.

The rule came down to us much more simply: *Noli Tangere*.  
Don't touch.

Long before there were the concerns of harassment and the consequences of unwanted touching, long before we cautiously understood that touching might be interpreted in many ways, from dominance and aggression, to innuendo and invitation, there was a basis of respect that the simple rule explained: *ut ea quae Religiosos decet gravitas et modestiae retineatur*, he prefaced the rule: *In order to retain that seriousness and modesty befitting religious men ....*

The *amplexus* was exempted as an enthusiastic and affirming welcome; so too would have been the warm handshake such as is our custom.

But, at work, we'd all be better off if we just followed the basic precept: don't touch.

## ***Point Sixteen***

### **The Rules of “Modesty”**

*Rugae in fronte, ac multo magis in naso, evidentur, ut serenitas exterius cernatur, quae interioris sit indicium.*

*Labia nec nimis compressa nec nimium diducta..*

*Manus, si teneantur. non in sustinenda veste occupentur, decenter quietae.*

Let internal serenity be reflected externally, with no facial or, still less, wrinkles on the nose shown.

The lips should be neither tightly compressed nor loosely held.

If the hands aren't in use to hold clothing, let them rest quietly.

Once again, Ignatius returns to the theme of integrity, with the exterior simply reflecting the interior.

His suggestions are so simple: serenity, composure, “at ease” presence.

I think Ignatius realized that externals can be backed into internals. Just as whistling in the dark can help a person feel a bit braver, so bodily control can positively affect the attitude and spirit. More importantly, and so he stresses it, internal composure can and should flow to the outside. The mastery of the inner self flows readily to the external self. The *persona* and the person should be one.

A senior partner I knew wore his thoughts on his face. For all we knew, it might have been just a question whether to have pizza or a sub for lunch, but as he walked through the office, his face sometimes reflected apparently torturous thoughts and myriad concerns. Made the more potent by self-absorption – he looked at no one and scarcely lifted his eyes above the point six feet ahead of his heavy progress. And subordinates would naturally think the worst: business is terrible ... there will be lay-offs.

Yet still another superior, his predecessor, let his face reflect a confident and upbeat spirit. His eyes met all others; his gentle smile would break into a warm grin. All is well, the subordinates would think.

It's not acting! It starts with getting the inner person in control and balance (a little Ignatian indifference, perhaps) and then in letting it all flow outward.

## *Point Seventeen*

### **Making It Real**

To apply the five senses to the first and second contemplations. ... To see the persons with the eyes of the imagination ... and gathering some fruit from the sight. To hear with the hearing that which they are saying, or might say, and reflecting within oneself to gather from it some profit. To smell and taste with the interior senses of smell and taste the infinite fragrance and sweet savor of the Divinity ... reflecting on oneself and gathering therefrom some profit. To touch with the interior touch ... always taking care to derive profit therefrom.

*The Spiritual Exercises, Second Week, The Fifth Contemplation*

The copy of the Exercises I worked from was translated from the Spanish. I neither have nor would be able to translate the original any better than I trust was done.

The selection I have chosen is only by way of sample. What Ignatius gives here are some suggestions and directions for contemplation.

It is his ordinary practice, through the weeks of the Exercises and the many contemplations he proposes. There are many variations of his approach, but a constant theme: that of making real whatever it is that one is contemplating.

What became a matter of habit was what, shorthand, we referred to simply as “the composition of place.” It became a

habitual way of engaging the imagination and the senses in thinking through most anything.

But a key that is not in the above selection lies in one of Ignatius' frequent preludes to these contemplations: "To ask for that which I desire." These were not intended to be idle day-dreams. They were purposeful meditations intended to accomplish a particular end. And what drove them was, indeed, the purpose: "that which I desire." The involvement of the senses was the means to achieving the purpose, the outcome. So, for instance, on the first day of the third week, the Exercitant is invited to contemplate the prelude to the Passion. And what he suggests we desire (the context is entirely spiritual) "will be heartfelt sorrow, and confusion of face, because for my sins our Lord goes to His Passion."

In our secular applications, the principles remain the same.

First, knowing what it is we are trying to understand or decide. This sounds so simple, yet how often it is that thinkers get tangled up in their own mental "underdrawers" (as a favorite mentor referred to the result) because they have no idea where they are going, whether they are just ruminating or really trying to figure something out ... and, if so, what. That's step one for Ignatius.

Step two is making it as real as possible. He does this by involving every sense possible – all our windows to reality that can be brought to bear. Some applications might not involve smell, for instance. (As powerful as smell is, triggering memories of childhood or a high-school dancing partner, it is not always applicable to a particular situation!) Learning seeps into the thinking through every sense. And this is what Ignatius wanted.

Think of TS Eliot's beautiful phrase: *music heard so deeply it is not heard at all, but you are the music while the music lasts*; think of Csikszentmihalyi's concept of Flow, the oneness of

experience and consciousness, and you see what Ignatius was doing: making a thought embedded into lived experience.

Consultants will try to move their audience to engage with a topic, to imagine a decision and resultant action all the way through to conclusion. “Visioning”, it is often called. And it applies to everything from painting a picture, dunking a 3-point basketball shot or rearranging a previously unchallenged structure at work.

Ignatius would have been a heck of a consultant. He gives us the “how-to” approach of making the fuzzballs into reality.

## Afterthoughts

A song of decades ago questions: *Is that all there is?* And we are conscious we may have left the reader with the impression that this is about all Ignatius had to offer on the topic.

Far from it. Alone, The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms, in a recent translation, spans more than 400 pages. What I have offered amounts to little more than tidbits from a gourmet feast.

With mention of the Constitutions, let me note one other trait the attitude of Ignatius offers to the business of today. Guess what the largest single topic of discussion is, representing perhaps 40% of the entire work? *It is the selection, admission and development of new members of his Society.*

In my years at work, a favorite activity was simply called “recruitment”, though the term necessarily encompassed everything from identifying the traits of those who would likely succeed, to cultivation of sources, competitive recruiting, exhaustive and continuous training and education, dedicated mentoring and so on. Imagine if every organization, if *your* organization, so valued its purpose and functioning that it made the selection and development of new members a prime function instead of an afterthought or, worse, an outsourced activity?

Wisdom abounds in the Rules and in the Constitution, but the entire work is not for everybody (and it is certainly not always easy reading) nor for every institution. The few points I offered were those that most often guided me in my work life.

I hope you have found that even this light sampling of the richness of Ignatius’ management style has given you something to think about, something to emulate, something to suggest to others. If so, my meager effort was worth it.

**March 2005**

**Michael E Egan  
Brother Manuductor**