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Generic Organizations Can't Buy Happiness!

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We all enjoy success. It's only human nature.

LET'S EXPLORE for a moment the idea and purpose of organizations. They exist for a purpose, right? So, what is that purpose? Is it to work on behalf of the members or to use the members to grow and financially secure the organization? Comprehension of this point requires more than a moment of reflection. The simple answer to these questions is that organizations exist to grow bigger. They do not exist for the members unless they were created on behalf of the members to begin with.

The bottom line is this: Belonging to just any organization can't help ensure credible career opportunities. Yet, many people have achieved a certain success while members of generic organizations. How is that? Why? What makes them different? In short, generic organizations are filled with generalists who are not members of a profession-specific organization because they continue to emulate yesterday's rhetoric. Yes, it is difficult to believe but it is true.

As you read this brief article, some part of you must be thinking, "Yeah, but one generic organization in particular represents the vast majority of the U.S. exercise physiologists. So, what is the problem?" As an exercise physiologist who is a member of a profession-specific organization, I understand that generic organizations will never make non-generic professionals happy or successful. Moreover, generic organizations expect if not require exercise physiologists to give away their power to be credible healthcare professionals. How? By promoting personal trainer

The opening comment from an ASEP colleague; paying a compliment to the ASEP members. "It's a pleasure to be here. The first thing I want to do is compliment you on being persistent and determined during the past several years. Believe me, to stay alive during these times you have to driven."

and instructor certifications, generic organizations sidestep correcting the problem at the academic level. Therefore, generic memberships are a misconception that robs exercise physiologists of their direction for personal and professional success.

To make sure that exercise physiologists are moving in the direction of personal and professional success, they must get over the sports medicine illusion. It can happen rather quickly if exercise physiologists would simply allow themselves to think outside the box. They are capable of debunking the illusion. That is, the illusion that sports medicine is responsible for how exercise physiologists perform. The bottom line is that a big membership or a mixed-bag of members does not have the power to make exercise

I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish humble tasks as though they were great and noble. The world is moved along not by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker.

*-- Helen Keller
(1880-1968)*

physiologists successful. While there is nothing wrong with wanting to be a member of a sports medicine organization, the secret of success is first learning what other healthcare professionals already know.

The inherent promise of success as a member of the American Physical Therapy Association isn't an illusion for physical therapists. They are happy because they know the profession-specific organization is working day and night on their behalf. The same thinking is true for occupational therapists and their professional organization. Their lives exemplify that external success is linked to supporting the American Occupational Therapy Association. The AOTA is a national society established in 1917 to represent the interests and concerns of occupational therapists, and to

improve the quality of occupational therapy services.

The way to stop supporting non-exercise physiology organizations is simply to turn on the lights. The world is full of people who are not thinking right. They deny their inner selves to become what they should be. To find success, exercise physiologists must begin an inner journey to realize and promote who they really are. By looking within themselves, they will discover that their success, power, and peace begin when they decide to stop selling themselves to non-exercise physiologists. It is not enough just to be a member of a large organization. There is more! Ask the members of other healthcare professions. For example, the dietitian understands the role of the American Dietetic Association (ADA). If exercise physiologists are to live the life intended for exercise physiologists, they must also understand the importance of belonging to their professional organization – the American Society of Exercise Physiologists (ASEP).

Let there be no doubt that the quest for a profession-specific organization is the answer to the professionalization of exercise physiology. If exercise physiologists are prepared to understand this point, they can find their way. They have the power to create the life they want after college. Then, they will not be limited by their past or the mistakes of others. But, unless they are creating their future, there isn't any doubt that their future is limited. Being

a member of ASEP sets the stage for exercise physiologists to live their life the way they want to live it. They write the script, and they do the talking.

Are you serious? Is it really that simple? My answer is yes. Why not? Our power to create our future is all in our attitude and approach to “what is exercise physiology” and “who is an exercise physiologist.” That is why the ASEP organizations defined both during the early moments of ASEP in 1997. Instead of thinking of yourself as a trainer or fitness instructor or even a clinical exercise physiologist as sports medicine wants you to think, believe you are an exercise physiologist and look for ways to live your belief. When you believe, your mind begins to open doors and possibilities. The good news is that exercise physiologists can know, think, and feel what they want in life. They can become “the” healthcare professionals who are responsible for prescribing exercise medicine.

Remember, the courage to think as an exercise physiologist cannot happen unless exercise physiologists face up to the failed rhetoric of sports medicine. Nothing can get done if exercise physiologists do not take the first step to change their thinking. Exercise physiologists cannot realize their inner power, strength, and success as healthcare professionals if they refuse to take risks. To grow as healthcare professionals, they must tackle head on life’s challenges. One such challenge is obvious and that is to look at your life as it is and imagine “what if” and what the future might be if you were to think as an exercise physiologist. No doubt doing so is a daunting task. Perhaps, it is too agonizing knowing what you should do but refuse to do it.

The greatest advances in human civilization have come when we recovered what we had lost: when we learned the lessons of history.

*-- Winston Churchill
(1874-1965)*

Today, more so than a decade ago, it is increasingly apparent that exercise “is” medicine that provides unprecedented opportunities for exercise physiologists. Yet, the ASEP leaders are bewildered that so few successful exercise physiologists outside of academia are emerging from their graduating classes. Instead, they are told to major in physical therapy or nursing or get one of a 100 different generic certifications. This acceptance of yesterday’s thinking can be observed throughout the U.S. The willingness of academic exercise physiologists to barter their profession for the benefit of position or status is not unique to exercise physiology, but nonetheless it is foolhardy and wrong. The exercise physiologists’ great deficit is that it does not have enough academic exercise physiologists (college teachers) who understand and support the ASEP organization. This has to change.

Exercise physiologists need leaders who seek their guidance from ASEP and not from the latest opinion from the leadership of a generic organization. They need leaders who are not interested in either embracing the status quo of a non-exercise physiology philosophy or who are seeking popularity with non-exercise physiologists. Rather, they need exercise physiologists who are not interested in chasing after yet another sports medicine trainer certification or a fitness fad that is gaining attention but without scientific merit. It’s that

simple. Once again, exercise physiologists find themselves back to the core principle of professionalism that requires them to trust their profession-specific colleagues.

It seems to me that “academic” exercise physiologists, in particular, should recognize that with the arriving of the 21st century came the responsibility to care for their students. Part of this calling was driven by the ASEP effort to develop the first-ever Code of Ethics, Accreditation, Board Certification, and Standards of Practice for exercise physiologists that commits its members to continued study and work that has its primary purpose the rendering of exercise medicine as its public service. This effort is still the calling of ASEP. It is consistent with the Latin word, profession, to speak forth. It is not enough that academic exercise physiologists do research. They must profess their beliefs and support the work of professionalism openly and publicly. They need to get involved, to speak up, individually and collectively by way of the ASEP professional organization.

The world has no room for cowards. We must all be ready somehow to toil, to suffer, to die. And yours is not the less noble because no drum beats before you when you go out into your daily battlefields, and no crowds shout about your coming when you return from your daily victory or defeat.

*-- Robert Louis Stevenson
(1850-1894)*