

Sandy Smith, Oak Ridger with a far reach

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on May 10, 2017)

As I have done before, this *Historically Speaking* focuses on an Oak Ridger who has made tremendous impact in his chosen career, but may well be taken for granted locally by Oak Ridgers. It is not unusual for this to happen. I have cited several such cases over the years. One of the more recent examples was Bobby Copeland, an internationally known expert in "B" western movies with over 20 books published on the subject. Bobby also published a really well done book on Oak Ridge history, *Oak Ridge, The Way It Was*.

I have known Sandy Smith for a number of years. We first worked together when he asked me to do an Oak Ridge history presentation for K-9 SOS Search on Site, the local company who provides canine search services to a number of government agencies.

In addition to wanting me to help him create a deeper appreciation for the history of Oak Ridge with the company he was working with, he also wanted to use my approach to presenting Oak Ridge history which is heavily loaded with stories. You see, Sandy uses stories as a key ingredient of his consulting business with various organizations regarding their practices and how to improve their effectiveness.

Through Sandy, I first met Freddie Brasfield, the founder of the K-9 SOS company. I was much impressed with what Sandy was doing with Freddie's company and equally impressed with Freddie and his uncanny ability to work with canines as well as people. I loved his stories about his favorite dog, an extremely intelligent Border Collie.

From this beginning, Sandy and I have often discussed the value of storytelling. We share an appreciation for the unique approach to teaching lasting change in organizations, people and even ourselves.

During the time I have known Sandy, he has shared videos he has found to be helpful and we have often met each other when we were both in the Oak Ridge Public Library (I think he uses that location for a quiet office). As we always do, each conversation eventually turns to storytelling and its amazing power as a communication tool.

He knows my experience and focus on Oak Ridge history and often seeks to gain insights he can use in his work. I do the same. It is a mutual sharing of life experiences and successful interactions. What fun to find a kindred spirit to share thoughts and know they are appreciated. Again, that goes both ways for us, I am sure.

Sandy's bio states: "For the past twenty-five years, Sandy Smith has been a professional speaker, corporate training specialist, meeting facilitator, and executive coach with leading organizations in the United States, Canada, and Europe. He is a member of the National Speakers Association and The World Futurist Society and writes an occasional blog for the *Huffington Post*. In his presentations, Sandy uses a lively style to address the most pressing issues and trends in modern business and to promote best practices for improvement. Clients range from such diverse areas as healthcare, manufacturing, marketing, retail, and U.S. government.

"Before entering the corporate world as a business consultant, Sandy was in private practice as a family counselor. In that role, he helped families collectively work through issues to strengthen relationships

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and enhance individual well-being. Along the way, Sandy discovered that dysfunctional families and organizations have many of the same traits and, similarly, that healthy and thriving families and organizations also share common characteristics.

“Through his extensive background in working with people facing crisis and change, Sandy now provides organizations with the insight they need to deal with the "stress and strain" of growing pains. He seeks to promote productive behavior in individual employees and in the organizational teams on which they work.

In one of his Huffington Post blog entries, entitled, *Whitewater Work Environment*, Sandy tells a number of stories to introduce the reader to the topic. He uses these stories to reinforce the fact that today's information overload through constant access to computers via smart phones has helped create frustration and may result in lessened effectiveness.

After several convincing stories demonstrating the problem, he recommends that the reader should first “prioritize what matters most — this minute, this hour, and today.” He continues to advise staying on this task for 90 minutes before taking some kind of a break in your routine. Seems simple, huh. Can you remember the last time you deliberately thought about how you were spending your time and made a strong effort to focus on the “important” rather than the “urgent?”

If you can recall easily when that was the case for you, good for you. You understand what Sandy is attempting to convey.

Sandy continues to encourage attention to our work environment (remember, he often works at the library!). He even illustrates this point with a story of a CEO who made a mandatory policy for senior leaders to spend a given amount of time weekly just thinking...that's right, just merely thinking without distractions.

He also suggests unplugging temporarily from the “electronic world.” That means taking deliberate action to avoid interruptions from electronic media and enforce it, relentlessly.

Finally, Sandy advises that we allow downtime to simply do nothing! I like that. It is very hard for me to do, but when I accomplish it well, the sense of satisfaction is extremely rewarding. To read the full article, go to: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sandy-smith/finding-focus-at-work_b_9873126.html#

In another of his blogs, Sandy says, “For nearly twenty years I have studied three major aspects of stress, frequency, intensity, and duration. The alarming thing about the stress we are experiencing today is that it is more frequent, more intense and lasts longer. The combination of these factors can lead to burn-out.”

He then defines burn-out as, “physical, mental and emotional exhaustion from long-term investment in demanding situations. Fatigue or frustration from commitment to a cause, a company or relationship that is no longer rewarding.”

Recognize yourself there? If so, Sandy will tell you action is required to find a “better way.” His experiences with companies, individuals, and groups of all kinds are based on his early training and experiences working with dysfunctional families which has prepared him well for the challenges he is helping others face today.

Read the full article here: <http://sandysmithseminars.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Of-Burnout-and-Better-Ways.pdf>

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I have not cited any of the 15 healthcare organizations, eight government agencies, eight travel companies, seven communications/media companies, seven manufacturing companies, two security companies, two food services companies, two engineering companies, two nonprofits and one pharmaceutical company that are Sandy's clients. But these 47 companies or organizations are evidence of his successful career.

Rather, I have chosen to focus on his methodology and brought you some of the jewels of effective living he has shared with me or with others. He is surely one of the Oak Ridgers that we might see in Kroger's and never realize the impact he has on those customers he serves. He looks just like one of us.

And he is. Sandy Smith, my friend and an example of a successful yet humble soul who truly enjoys helping others deal with the adversities life has to offer. And he does it well!

To learn more about Sandy Smith Seminars, go to: <http://sandysmithseminars.com/>



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