

Since this is February, which conjures up romantic images of Valentines and, in my case, doting on my significant other, an incredible woman, this month makes me think about women and relationships. I hope no one would ever consider me a sexist because I admire women and not just for being a person that can bear children but because I want the women in my life to be my “partners,” whether they are my significant other or a consultant to me or one of my cohorts. At the risk of men thinking I am a pansy or something, I will confidently say that I believe, as a general rule, that women are more organized than men, that they are more disciplined than men, especially in sticking to getting tasks done, and that they have great instincts, frequently better than men. Maureen Dowd, who I think is a great writer, said in *Are Men Necessary*, that “A woman who has qualities that put one in awe is far more likely to make me think she is worth falling for,” with which I agree.

But my point I want to make is really about partnerships. I think too often that we fail to consider the people in our lives as partners. I am not referring to the generic sense of what we think is a partner, but rather that our partner’s participation in our decision-making can have a powerful effect on the outcome of our decisions. And surrounding ourselves with the right partners is also critical; partners that we can help them and they can help us “advance confidently in the direction of our dreams . . .” (as said Thoreau). For example, for many years I have had a most incredible CPA, a woman, who I have come to admire her technical skills as well as our friendship. In the sense of being my “partner,” she is not employed by or a principal of any of my companies; however, in the sense of participating in the outcome of my decision-making she is instrumental. I routinely rely on her to answer what can be simple to complicated questions. She is worth every dime I pay to her and even if we had not developed through the years a great friendship her responses to my questions and her participation in the outcome of what I need to know is invaluable.

My significant other is also my partner; far beyond being the person I wake up and play golf with (sorry about ending in a preposition but it seems too lame to state “far beyond being the person with whom . . .”). We rely on each other in our decision-making for our businesses, we listen and consider each other’s life choices about friends, family, social and business aspects, and we make investment decisions together. Her organizational sense, her discipline and her instincts counter-balance my own, in a positive way. Call it a yin-yang thing or whatever you want; but I know it works.

But this partnership thing should not be confined to man/woman, or to significant others, or to the persons in our lives that are traditional partners like in business; we should consider the potential effect of everyone with whom we interact (there, I want the preposition die-hards to know I can use it), the people in our lives. Everyone we work and play with can have an effect on the outcome of our decisions. If we ignore that power, or if we use as partners the wrong people, we are missing an incredible tool available to help us make better decisions and to advance our goals. Aristotle said “excellence is not a singular act, but a habit.” Make it a habit to think of every strong and reliable person in your life as a partner – that is, as a person whose input in your decision-making can help you do so better.