

The Bamboo Tree by Mark Matteson

In 1963, my family lived in Yokohama, Japan. I was six years old and had a nanny, Yoshiko-san. She took me everywhere she went. We would often stop at the same Buddhist temple before going home. One day, an elderly gentleman was digging a hole. Like Curious George, I asked why? Yoshiko-san asked him in Japanese, on my behalf (she already knew), what he was doing. He explained that he was planting a bamboo shoot.

“The process is simple,” she lovingly explained. “He takes an eighteen-inch bamboo shoot, digs a hole three feet deep, and covers it with soil.” Smiling, she put her arm around me and said, “The most important part takes the longest. He must come back every day for a year and water the shoot. Nothing will happen. He must come back for another year, every day, and water. Nothing will happen. He must come back a third year, every day, and water. Nothing will happen. He must come back a fourth year, every day, and water. Nothing will happen. He must come back a fifth year and water every day, but still nothing will happen, until the beginning of the sixth year. Because he is faithful and waters the bamboo shoot for one thousand eight hundred twenty-five days in a row, something magical happens. The little shoot, at the beginning of the sixth year, will grow **NINETY FEET IN SIX WEEKS!!!**” Yes, that’s right. The bamboo grows almost three feet a day for a month and a half! All the growth happens underground, out of sight.



The Japanese culture emphasizes the long-term in almost everything. It took Toyota almost 50 years to become the number one car manufacturer in the world, one day at a time. We all need to understand the power of compound interest. Would you rather be given a million dollars one time, OR be given a penny and double it every day for 30 days? Take a look:

Day 1: \$.01
Day 2: \$.02
Day 3: \$.04
Day 4: \$.08
Day 5: \$.16
Day 6: \$.32
Day 7: \$.64
Day 8: \$1.28
Day 9: \$2.56
Day 10: \$5.12
Day 11: \$10.24
Day 12: \$20.48
Day 13: \$40.96
Day 14: \$81.92
Day 15: \$163.84
Day 16: \$327.68
Day 17: \$655.36
Day 18: \$1,310.72
Day 19: \$2,621.44
Day 20: \$5,242.88
Day 21: \$10,485.76
Day 22: \$20,971.52
Day 23: \$41,943.04
Day 24: \$83,886.08
Day 25: \$167,772.16
Day 26: \$335,544.32
Day 27: \$671,088.64
Day 28: \$1,342,177.28

Day 29: \$2,684,354.56

Day 30: \$5,368,709.12

I have no way of knowing what you do for a living. Perhaps you own a company. Maybe you are in sales. You might be a marketing manager. Hey, maybe you are the CEO of a Fortune 1000 company. It's a good bet that if you are reading this, one thing is certain: you are serious about your personal and professional development. You are in the top four percent in your field. You see, if you are to grow, become, and ascend, all your growth will happen on the inside where no one sees it for a long time. It's what you do when no one is looking that matters. Perhaps you are at a crossroads, frustrated and searching for something that will take you to another level. Are you willing to try something new? If so, there is a simple process, but you must commit to it for 30 days. It will transform your effectiveness. We will call it "The Bamboo Hour."

I assume that you know your number one professional goal. If not, send me an e-mail and I will forward a special report on that very topic. Less than 10 percent of you reading this will actually make the time to complete the process. Those who do, will leap frog ahead of their competition and ascend quickly in their organization.

Here we go with your new three-act "**Bamboo Hour**" play.

Act One: The First 20 Minutes

1. Get up an hour earlier than usual.
2. Make some coffee or tea, choose a quiet place with a comfortable chair, and turn off your cell phone and computer.
3. Grab your journal and a pen.
4. Write your number one goal at the top of the page as though it were already true. Write it in the first person, present tense, in positive and powerful language.
5. Say a little prayer or poem, something to calm your mind
6. Breathe deeply and relax. Be still for at least 10-15 minutes.
7. Wait for the still small voice: whispers from the soul, ideas, thoughts, names, to-do's. Do not edit. Write down everything that comes to you. This is essential. There are no bad ideas. It's all right side of the brain flow.

Act Two: The Second 20 Minutes

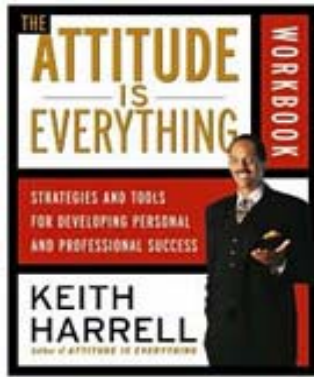
1. Read a book in alignment with your goal, preferably written by someone who has done what you want to do and has been where you want to go.
2. Read for 15-20 minutes, underlining and highlighting passages that resonate with you. If you are not a reader, listen to a CD by the author.
3. Jot down any ideas that come to you.
4. Read long enough to have at least one idea grab you and then stop. Twenty minutes is plenty of time, but feel free to read longer if time and schedule permit.
5. Mark key pages in the book.
6. Transfer the BIG ideas to your journal.

Act Three: The Third 20 Minutes

1. Plan your day on paper.
2. What are your Six Most Important Things to Do Today?
3. Prioritize them in order of importance.
4. Do at least three things on your list today without fail.
5. Don't worry that you didn't get them all done; they will transfer to tomorrow's list.
6. Do this every day for 30 days as a test.
7. If you achieve positive results, do it again for another 30 days.

If you are willing to keep an open mind and try something new, this will transform your life. None of these ideas are new. Chances are, you do at least one of them now. The difference is that you have not seen them combined, or in this order, before. You might be saying, "Hey, Mark, I KNOW this stuff!" I said the same thing. One day at a recent retreat, I realized: "It's not more information I need; rather, it's a better use of what I already know!" And guess what, "If I KNOW and don't DO, I am just an EDUCATED DERELICT!" What is needed is less knowing and a lot more doing!

Why not water your bamboo shoot every day for a month? You might get hooked on this process and do it for 1,825 days. If you do, you will grow 90 feet in six weeks! Everyone will be astounded at your growth, everyone except Yoshiko-san and me.



Book of the Month

When I was a junior in high school, I saw the best basketball team in the history of Washington State boys basketball, the 1973-74 Garfield Bulldogs. Their nickname was “Super Dogs.” They didn’t just go 24-0 that year; they dismantled their opponents. The Bulldogs won most of their games by 25-30 point margins. Their leading scorer was Keith Harrell. He was smooth as SILK and a high school All-American.

Keith received over 300 college recruitment letters. He chose Seattle University and enjoyed a fine college career. Upon graduation, he went to work for IBM and eventually became one of their most successful trainers. He went on to write five books and deliver world-class keynote presentations around the world.

What makes Keith’s story so compelling is that he had a stutter for most of his childhood. He overcame it. His grandmother reminded him that “his brain was working faster than his mouth.” I can relate. When we moved from Japan to Seattle, I was in the first grade and stuttered badly. Eventually, it went away on its own. Ironic, isn’t it? Many a stutterer has gone on to become successful public speakers or actors (think James Earl Jones, the voice of Darth Vader).

Yesterday, I found his book, *Attitude is Everything*, and read it in two sittings. I stretched my Bamboo Hour into three. He was special on and off the court. It’s a great read. Go to www.keithharrell.com and watch his video.

He asks in the book: “Do you go to the doctor once a year for a check up? How about the dentist for a cleaning? Do you change your oil regularly? How come you don’t get a ‘check-up from the neck up’ regarding your attitude annually?” He goes on to say, “Find a way to change your attitude and let go of blame, past hurts, and anger, and replace it with forgiveness and gratitude.”

From personal experience, I have found that making a GRATITUDE list on a weekly basis helps to shift my focus. "When I change the way I look at things, the things I look at change!"

He was passionate about reading books, listening to audio books, and attending seminars. He watered his bamboo shoot every day for years. By age 45, he was conducting 120 presentations a year.

On October 20, I picked up the *Seattle Times* sports page to read, sadly, that Keith Harrell passed away after a bout with cancer. He was 54 years old. He was special and will be missed. He, too, was smooth as silk. I think he also doubled a penny every day for a month, by watering his bamboo shoot.