

Decisions, Decisions!

John was all ready for his vacation. He had his tickets bought, his hotel reserved, all his work caught up at the office and today was the last day of work. Tomorrow morning, he would get on the plane to France, and wouldn't even think about the office for two whole, glorious weeks. He had been saving and planning for this trip for 10 years.

The telephone ring interrupted his thoughts and he dreamily answered it. "John Schneider speaking."

"John. This is Harry. Please come to my office."

John's boss, Harry Parker. "Now what?" thought John as he got up from his desk. He walked down the hall to Harry's office and knocked on the door.

"Come in."

John opened the door to be confronted by the worse scowl he had ever seen on his boss' face, and he had seen many a scowl in his time at Gerard & Company. John closed the door behind him, then walked over and seated himself at one of the chairs facing his boss' desk.

"Yes, sir?" John asked.

"John, we have a problem. Greg Jenkins has had a heart attack and cannot complete the negotiation on the Murphy-Spears contract. I need you to take his place. You have been working with Greg on it and are the most familiar with it in this company."

"But..."

I need you to be on a plane to Chicago this afternoon at 3:00."

"But..."

"Please see Greg's secretary to go over any changes made to the contract since the last time you reviewed it. Then you may go home and get packed for your trip."

"But, sir, I'm already packed for a trip! I leave for France tomorrow morning and will be gone for two weeks. I've been saving for this trip for 10 years!" John wailed.

Harry Parker's scowl deepened. "That's too bad. You will just have to cancel it. This contract is very important to our firm." Harry paused. "You may even say your job is on the line with this one, John."

"My j-job, sir?"

Harry leaned forward slightly, still scowling, punching his forefinger into the desk to emphasize his next words. “Let’s just put it this way. If you aren’t on that plane this afternoon at 3:00, you’re fired.”

The shock of this statement literally sat John back in his chair. “Fired? But, sir, I’ve been with this company for 12 years!”

“You heard me. Now, go and see Greg’s secretary.”

Never had John had such a decision before him. What should he do? His carefully planned trip to France, a trip for which he had saved so hard for the last decade, a trip he had dreamed about since he was a teenager and had taken French classes in school, or his job. John’s jaw trembled slightly.

“I’ll be on the plane to…”

Now, what would be the decision you would make if you were in John’s shoes. Unemployment is above 10% and John’s job is very specialized. There aren’t more than a handful of companies in the country who need someone of his skills. Finding another job, especially at his pay level, since he had been with Gerard & Company for 12 years, would be nearly impossible.

“…Chicago at 3:00 this afternoon.”

Harry Parker’s scowled ceased. “I knew you would understand, John.”

John stood up, dazed, disappointed, and depressed. Ten years of saving down the drain. He knew that his company would not reimburse him for his trip expenses. In order to get the lowest prices for his travel and lodging costs, he had gone the non-refundable route. It would take him 10 more years, at least, to resave the money to try it again. Ten more years of hard work to see his dream come true.

He left his boss’ office and turned toward the secretarial pool to see Greg’s secretary.

But, now, what would have happened if he had completed that sentence “…France tomorrow morning. I’m sorry, Mr. Parker, but this trip is non-refundable and I have been saving for it for over 10 years. I have dreamed about it since I was 16 and I refuse to give it up. You’ll have to find someone else to represent the company in Greg’s place, or tell Murphy-Spears that either Greg will see them when he is up to it, or that I will see them in two weeks when I return from my vacation.”

In quantum physics, they say that every decision made creates a new time-line, a new reality that exists in the universe as a parallel dimension.

Depending on John’s answer, Harry, too, would have a decision to make. If John answered that he was going to Chicago, then Harry could breathe easy knowing the

contract negotiations would be completed on schedule and his own boss would be pleased. But then, he could either gloat over his power over John, or think, “Wuss! How I hate John Schneider and his namby-pamby ways. Why couldn’t he have been a man and stood up to me? Even if he completes this contract, I think I will find an excuse to fire his weenie little ass. Then I don’t have to look at him anymore and can forget he even exists.”

At which point new time-lines would be created in which to cover both options – one which would see John losing his job even if he did go to Chicago and do a great job closing the contract negotiations, and one where he returned from a job well done and continue life as before.

Now, let’s look at what might have happened had John answered that he was going to France. Of course, Harry would have to make a decision on the spot. In one direction, Harry would reply, scowl deepening even more, “Really. Then clean out your desk, Mr. Schneider. You are fired. Enjoy your vacation, but do not expect a letter of recommendation from this company when you return.”

Or, Harry’s eyebrows would shoot up and he would clear his throat, “Seriously, John, you can’t be saying that. You know how important this contract is. Can’t you just go to Chicago now and France later?” When John would say, “No, I can’t,” Harry would look down at the pen on his desk, fully realizing how valuable an employee John was to Gerard & Company, and, especially, to Mr. Gerard himself, and that he, Harry, really had no authority to fire John. He should have known John would have taken that stance and Harry now had to eat a little crow.

“Well, John, I understand. Have a good time in France and I’ll see you when you return. I’ll go down to see Greg’s secretary, get a copy of the revised contract, then go home and pack. I can read over the contract and background information while I’m on my way to Chicago.”

Then John would get up, thank his boss, leave and go back to his own office, elated that he had stood up to the old curmudgeon. In fact, John was planning to ask for a raise when he got back from France.

But, instead, John had answered that he would be on the plane to Chicago at 3:00 that afternoon.

One last chance for John, though, to go to France, because, let’s face it, he really wanted to go to France and tell Harry where to put the job. But, he didn’t do it. He went to get the revised contract, then home to pack for Chicago. Chicago in February was a dismal prospect.

Did John make the right decision or the wrong decision? The only way to tell would be to see what would have happened if he had told Harry that he was going to France. If Harry fired him, so be it; if Harry wished him a good trip, all fine and good, but the trip

itself would still be the same trip. Because, no matter what Harry said, John would stick to his self-made vow to not think about work for two whole, glorious weeks.

John stayed at the Hôtel la Marguerite in the Rue d'Argent in Paris. He had been there for three days, and was planning to go to the Louvre and finally, at last, get to see the Mona Lisa in person. He had his ticket for the bus in his hand and was waiting with the rest of the tourists for the bus to arrive. The excitement he was feeling was so intoxicating he could barely feel his feet on the pavement. Paris in February was a bit rainy and cold, and his umbrella wasn't of the highest quality, but in his heart, the sun was shining and the air soft and still.

The bus arrived and he and about 20 other people climbed on board. He took the first empty set of seats he came to and took the seat next to the window. Even through the grayness and rain, he didn't plan to miss a single bit of the trip out to the museum. Even the crying baby in the arms of the lady in the seat behind him couldn't dampen his spirits.

When they arrived at their destination, John's camera was out of its case and he snapped shot after shot of the glass entrance, the building, the grounds, everything he could so he could have plenty of pictures for his future memories. The group was herded through the entrance, tickets checked and punched, audio devices secured and attached and, again, herded to the first exhibit.

John intently read the placards next to each painting, hit the number indicated into his audio player and listened just as intently as the voice in heavily accented English gave further information on what he was seeing. As interested as he was in all that he was seeing, he could hardly wait until he saw the one painting he had dreamed about for over 20 years.

About half way through the tour, John became hungry, and decided to take a break in the café for tea and a sandwich. There he was joined by another gentleman who had been on his bus and who also had decided to take a break.

John took a bite of his sandwich and chewed. It wasn't what he had expected, but it wasn't bad either. Another experience to write in his journal that night back at his hotel. "My brain is pretty full of information from this morning. How about yours?" John said casually to the man seated next to him.

"Yes, mine, too, is full," said the accented voice. "You are an American?"

"Yes, I am. Where are you from?"

The man laughed at the question. "I'm from London. I'm on a vacation I have dreamed about for a long time. Every time I had intended to come to Paris, something else came up. Several times I ended up on vacation someplace else, but this time, I was determined to come to Paris. My name is John Schneider, by the way."

John, halfway through another bite of his sandwich, choked and had to be pounded on the back by his companion. Finally, he spluttered, “J-John Schneider? Really?”

The British man frowned slightly and said, “Yes, why?”

“Because *my* name is John Schneider, too!”

Both men laughed together and pulled out their passports to prove it to one another. Sure enough, both men were named John Schneider. And more than that, they discovered that both men were staying within a block of one another in Paris. The rest of the tour, John and John stay together and finally got to see the Mona Lisa. It was everything the American John had imagined it to be and he was very impressed with the skill of the painting. He couldn't stop smiling at it.

On the bus back to Paris, American John invited British John to his hotel for dinner. As dessert was being served, British John turned to American John and asked what he did for a living. American John frowned slightly.

“Well, I used to be employed with Gerard & Company in Newark, New Jersey, but...” John explained to his companion the scene between him and Harry before his trip to Paris. Then he explained exactly what his job function was and how long it had taken him to work his way up in the company to his current position.

British John sat and listened carefully. “So, you have a very analytical and organized brain, then?”

“Oh, yes. I have MBAs from Harvard in both Accounting and Business Administration. I earned my CPA on the first try and have continued my education in the actuarial area to help further my career.”

British John sat silent for a minute, then took a breath and spoke. “I work for a company in London, Stinton, DeClary & Schneider, Ltd. We just happen to have a job opening for someone like you. Would you... Do you mind if I ask you some questions?”

Stunned, American John just said, “No, go ahead.”

At the end of the second week of vacation, American John Schneider found himself on a plane to London having been interviewed in person by his new friend, and boss, John Schneider, and over the phone by John's partner, Gerald Stinton. The position offered to him was an internship in their firm merely to familiarize himself with the company before going back to the United States to head up their new division in Chicago, Illinois. The pay was nearly three times what he was being paid at Gerard & Company.

A year after setting up the new division and seeing it become successful in its new, American side of the business, John married Sarah Stinton, the lovely sister of his employer, Gerald.

So, you tell me if John had made the right decision when he told Harry that he would be on that 3:00 plane to Chicago.

Moral of the story: Sometimes you have to do what you really want to do rather than what is “right.” You never know where that new path may lead you.