

**Openings:** Rumi, as he so often does, expresses profound truth in this simple verse.

A candle as it diminishes explains,  
*Gathering more and more is not the way. Burn, become light and heat and help, melt.*

**Spotlight:** We once knew that we were finished for the day when our bodies were spent or when there was no more light. As well, the seasons and even the weather influenced what we could accomplish. Today, nature plays less of a role in regulating our activities which requires us to take greater responsibility for doing so.

We all know that there are limits to what we are capable of accomplishing during our workday. Our success in gauging these limits is very different depending on the type of work we perform. A forty-hour week of manual labour leaves its mark on a person's body while a seventy-hour week in front of a computer screen may only results in mild eyestrain. As well, a week of lifting and carrying produces tangible evidence of progress while a week of manipulating text or figures may barely put a dent in our inbox. Ironically, when our limits are not well defined, it appears that we can work without exhaustion and without achieving our objectives.

When we cannot viscerally gauge our limits, we can through time and money, and being aware of how we trade one for the other, still know our limits. The exchange of time for money is the primary regulating mechanism at work in our lives. The challenge is balancing the exchange rate so that we experience both time and money in abundance. This becomes an issue for enterprises because it is through our enterprises that we transact the exchange.

Establishing a fair exchange rate for all stakeholders is the most important objective of any enterprise. For customers, this is expressed through the price charged for goods and services and for owners, this is expressed in the return on their investment. For employees, the enterprise must do more than provide an appropriate compensation package. The enterprise must communicate very clearly the appropriate amount of time that an employee can exchange.

More sales, more profit, and more market share are valid business objectives. Rewarding people for their contribution towards achieving these objectives seems only fair. Unfortunately, these rewards can communicate to people that they should do what ever is necessary—including ignoring their limits—to achieve the business objectives. Sustainable results are only possible when an individual consistently experiences an abundance of both time and money making this personal experience an important indicator of the business's long-term health.

We all have different personal objectives. With luck, we work in enterprises where we can play our part in achieving corporate objectives that we believe in while reaching our personal objectives. As individuals and organisations, we must be conscious of the ongoing exchange of time for money. Any lack of awareness does not stop the exchange but it does restrict our ability to keep it balanced.

**Facts & Figures:** According to the recent Joint Canada-U.S. Survey of Health, both Canadians and Americans are generally in good health and receive good health care. Even though the two countries have very different health care systems, the results achieved are very similar. One significant difference between the systems is the barrier to entry. In Canada, the barrier is time where waits for non-life threatening procedures can be months, perhaps years. In the U.S., the barrier is money where spending on health is \$4,270USD per capita (13 percent of GDP) versus \$2,250USD (9 percent of GDP) in Canada.

**Quote:** Is the following observation by economist John Kenneth Galbraith aligned with your experience? If so, do you want it to be?

*"Money is a singular thing. It ranks with love as man's greatest source of joy. And with death as his greatest source of anxiety. Over all history it has oppressed nearly all people in one of two ways: either it has been abundant and very unreliable, or reliable and very scarce."*

**Musings:** Growing up within a small business family, I spent many delightful hours of my youth observing people at work. Of all these cherished memories, those of the midday meal are the most vivid. The chairs in the cramped office were arranged in a rough circle, lunch pails opened, linen napkins placed across knees, and the carefully prepared meals laid out.

With practised care, thermoses, sandwiches, vegetables, fruit, and deserts were all partaken with the greatest respect. The conversation flowed freely, between mouthfuls of food, following any number of topics that spontaneously arose. While there could be interruptions, the meal was never hurried through to allow people to return to their activities: the meal was an integral part of the workday, as important as any other aspect of the day.

When I next consider pushing through lunch to "get the job done", I hope to remember the elegance of those repasts and make time to nourish both my body and soul, taking in the sustenance required to complete my journey.