

Openings: Unitarian minister Robert G. Hardies provides us with the following thought:

"Beauty does not survive commodification. There is something ephemeral about it. Something delicate. The moment it is clutched, it is destroyed."

Spotlight: Business is a numbers game. Between cash flow, margin, unit sales, and all the other indicators, it is tempting to believe that these numbers hold some intrinsic value. Most management theories extol the virtues of measuring and controlling all aspects of the business so from this perspective, the numbers are significant. Because it is important to monitor the health of the business, one does not want to avoid watching the numbers. The challenge is ensuring that the numbers do not detract from the wonder and beauty of business.

The business section of every bookstore continues to grow larger with offerings from new and established authors. A significant portion of these books are biographies telling the story of leaders and their organisations with only a very few delving into the numbers of a business. One might assume that the explanation regarding the disparity between these categories of business books is the fact that stories sell better than theories. To a great degree, this is true and so the question to ask is why: why are stories about businesses more compelling than business numbers?

No matter how extensive a suite of metrics you assemble, there is very little that these numbers can do to inspire an enterprise's stakeholders. Motivation is the primary objective behind the numbers. A salesperson may be motivated to sell more to earn her quarterly bonus or a customer may be motivated to purchase today to take advantage of time-limited savings. Neither is inspired by the numbers—sales targets and sale prices—to deepen her relationship with the enterprise. As important as they are, the numbers tell very little about what matters to people.

Numbers appeal to the intellect. That they can be added, subtracted, multiplied, and divided provides endless fascination to the mind. Beyond this entertainment value, the numbers catch the imagination of few people. Even as a motivator, the numbers must be attached to a prize before they take on any value. Stories, on the other hand, are intrinsically interesting to people. In the office or on the shop floor, a good story—even one about the numbers—can inspire people to perform incredible feats.

Every enterprise is primarily, a meeting place. On Main Street or in cyberspace, we come together to transact business. The more fully we engage in our transactions, the more we are inspired by the wonder and beauty of business. Take every available opportunity to ensure that each transaction tells a story that in turn creates a memory that will not soon be forgotten.

Facts & Figures: It is estimated that half of all bills and coins carry infectious germs. More than 10,000 Americans a year require an emergency room visit for money related injuries and five people a year are killed by falling vending machines.

Musings: Crows are a constant source of wonder. They are both silent and noisy, omnipresent and invisible, solitary and gregarious. The contradictions these members of the family *corvidae* encompass have always drawn me to stealthfully observe their activities and interactions.

I have read of investigations into avian intelligence that rank crows as being the most intelligent birds. This does not surprise me and it does little to enhance my experience of crows. The only fact pertaining to crows that interests me is knowing that a group of crows is called a *murder* and that is strictly because it is such a unique name.

Seeing a few crows in flight together is not uncommon through most of the year. For a brief period in early autumn each year, the number of birds seen flying together increases dramatically. I have never counted how many and I am certain that the number can climb into the hundreds. The procession can last for almost half an hour with several birds flying abreast and few if any gaps between formations.

As I do each year, I am watching for the few days when this phenomenon occurs. I am not concerned about why crows behave in this way; I am only concerned with being a part of the experience.

Lexicon: Understand comes from the Old English word *understandan* meaning "stand in the midst of". It is an experiential rather than intellectual knowing that comes through close contact or long experience. In this sense, understanding has greater depth than is possible through a simple mental construct.

Just For Fun: In Pacific Grove, parking metres know when a car pulls out of a spot and quickly reset to zero, eliminating the joy of parking free on someone else's dollar. In Montreal, when cars stay past their time limit, metres send real-time alerts to an enforcement officer's hand held device. Meanwhile in Aspen, wireless "in-car" metres may eliminate the need for curbside parking meters altogether. They dangle from the rear-view mirror inside the car, ticking off prepaid time.