

Open Mic Recaps, November 17, 2010
Two Concurrent Conversations on Abundance

Next Open Mic: Wednesday, Dec. 22 at Noon eastern time: “An Appreciative Year-end Review and a Positive Look at 2011.” (Change of topic, for 2010’s last Open Mic.)
1-213-289-5450, passcode 202779#.

Headline News: Today was a first for Open Mic; we had two simultaneous (and very different) Open Mic conversation hours about Abundance today! One was reflective and thought-provoking, like a quiet conversation between people seated at a table, quietly absorbed in the topic. The other was much higher energy, with lots of ideas being thrown about: very lively. That’s why I titled this issue “Open Mic Recaps.” Read them here.

Recaps:

The Mystery, Revealed: One of my OM announcements contained an extra zero in the passcode. Therefore, I was joined by just three other folks. We wondered at the small turnout, but proceeded to have an abundant conversation about Abundance. Simultaneously, five other people used the “extra-zero” passcode and had their own great Open Mic conversation on Abundance. They even sent me notes for the Recap; how cool is that?! I know most of the folks in this second group, and I can tell you that it was clearly The Gathering of the Extroverts, which helps explain the sense of high energy. I was glad that I was in “our” Open Mic conversation, I’m sorry I missed “theirs”, but I’m sorrier still that we couldn’t have shuffled the two decks and come up with one conversation.

OPEN MIC CONVERSATION # ONE (“Ours”)

I organized our conversation around several questions about Abundance. Here they are, along with participants’ responses. At the end of each section, I’ll pose some questions for your consideration, in *(italics)*. I hope you will find these questions worth pondering by yourself, with colleagues, with family, your study group...the possibilities are endless.

Abundance: What Comes to Mind?

I cited some meanings of “Abundance” from www.dictionary.com, including “overflowing fullness” (e.g., an abundant harvest), “a feeling of plenty,” and “affluence, wealth”. I invited our group members to do a brainstorm on “What words come to mind when you think about ‘Abundance’?” Here’s what they said:

“Experiencing life fully”	“Warmth”
“Enough...in all areas”	“Contentment”
“Fullness”	“Absence of striving or greed”
“Softness”	

Clearly, none of these are directly financial in nature. (*Any of these associations surprise you? What words come to mind when you think about “Abundance”? Are they money-centered?*)

“When Do You Feel Most ‘Abundant’?”

“When interactions at home are going smooth and easy”

“In my dedicated marriage”

“When my blended family is around me. I see family in all directions, and feel very abundant.”

“My firm, a family of sorts; 20 of us, with an abundance of positive relationships.”

“In my day-to-day life, being privileged to live where I live.” (Lucky guy, he lives in Colorado.)

“When I feel in balance financially – balanced between enjoying now and later, and having the financial resources for both. It gives me safety and security, and provides me the opportunity to have a range of activities and experiences.”

“Throughout the day, if things are going okay. If everything is just right.”

(Which of these resonate with you? When do you feel most ‘abundant?’)

“What Do You Do to Get More Abundance?”

“I do gratitude exercises that you taught us. When I do them regularly, it increases my awareness of the abundance in my life.”

“I catch myself when I’m doing the opposite – when I catch myself worrying about ‘stuff,’ I try my best to stop doing that. It frees up time to be more mindful and grateful. There are so many things calling out for negative attention, it can overwhelm my available bandwidth.”

“I notice things as they are. If they’re basically okay, I feel abundance. Just paying attention, being present, brings me more of a sense of abundance than ‘most anything else seems to.’”

(What do you do that brings a greater sense of abundance? What can you do today, and in this season of celebration, to foster that sense in yourself and others?)

How Have the Last Two Years Changed Your Client Conversations Related to Abundance?

“Not as much as I would like! Clients looking to where they want to be in ten years still define it in material terms. They don’t turn down the ‘Hedonist Knob.’ I haven’t done enough to help them think about ‘What is abundance anyway?’”

“I haven’t had that specific ‘abundance conversation’. The process I use always has incorporated that conversation. For my clients, the worst outcome of the last two years has been delayed retirement. They were okay, by and large.”

“Since becoming a Money Quotient (www.moneyquotient.org) licensee and using some of their tools, I’ve begun having client conversations about how satisfied they are with their lives. I start with a prepared MQ questionnaire (note: the Financial Satisfaction Survey), which stimulates a

conversation. I've always been pretty investment-management focused and structured, so their structured approach integrates well with mine."

(How have your client conversations shifted since the finance world went all pear-shaped? What are your most useful conversations about abundance, money, and meaning, these days?)

Participants' Takeaways from this Open Mic: "Great discussion!" "It confirmed and expanded my ideas about what 'rich' is, and about the business I'm really in." "It affirmed my calling, and the rightness of how I'm approaching these Abundance conversations."

It doesn't get any better than that, for me – unless, of course, we'd incorporated the other callers. (I'm still shaking my head about that extra zero!) So let's see what The Other Five were up to:

CONVERSATION # TWO ("*Theirs*")

Here's what the self-appointed scribe of the other Open Mic conversation, emailed me. (Thanks, Andy!)

"We missed you at today's OM, but rather than focus on the 'lack' we focused on 'abundance.'

Chris had spoken last week on 'Realizing Abundance' at his son's school. (Note from Ed: I emailed Chris for details, and his reply appears after Andy's account.)

We talked about the sources of abundance we all enjoy: money, food, TIME, ease, longevity, health/healthcare, and even consumption.

We talked a lot about the emerging field of financial therapy, citing Kathleen Burns Kingsbury (www.kbkweathconnection.com), Joan Carroll-Cronin (who was on the call), and the financial planner/therapist teams of Rick Kahler/Dave Jetson and Michelle Maton/Marty Martin. And how they are helping clients transform their perception of abundance so that it doesn't reside solely in accumulating 'stuff'.

We closed by discussing how we can stay aware of abundance in hard times. We came up with these practices: counting blessings (aka: gratitude practice); pointing out our shared blessings to others; practicing positivity and appreciation for what we have (rather than lamenting what we don't have); and focusing on our deepest values. We also emphasized the importance of acknowledging the reality of suffering and even developing curiosity about it, learning from it, not ignoring or running from it."

Chris' "Realizing Abundance" talk is a fertile source of ideas that you might adopt for your own conversations about abundance, with clients, family members, anyone – even with yourself. Here's how he described it in an email:

"I started my workshop at with a mixture of staff, parents, and several clients with the question of where we have abundance in our lives currently. Participants' responses included health, shelter, food and the school we were sitting in. I threw out the idea that time was a source of abundance, and is the great equalizer; no one of us has any more than anyone else. This led to lively discussion about setting priorities.

I then introduced the idea of being grateful for our material abundance. Did people think having another \$50,000 in their life would really solve their problems? As counter-examples, I cited the parade of celebrities and athletes (Tiger Woods as an example) whose lives are a train wreck despite the trappings of fame and money,.

I then talked about the idea that certain words are toxic, and limit our sense of abundance as well as what we can do and achieve in the world. I described words like 'should', 'ought to', 'but', 'can't', 'have to', and 'average' as being words of limitation. I cited the press and its role in how we think and act. I asked participants to think of more constructive terms, and they came up with quite a good list.

I discussed what I call 'little victories' and how they represent incremental changes with monumental results. I encouraged people to look for them in their lives because sometimes the smallest act can create enormous ramifications.

Finally, I used an exercise that Dave Jetson did at Nazrudin. I collected some paper money from several people who want to 'play a game'. I held out my hand, people put money into it, and I stood in front of them. We talked about how they felt about me holding it and what it meant. A man talked about the ownership of the bills and then I slid them into my pocket and observed the reactions. It led to some great discussion. (Note: Chris didn't mention it, but I know that he gave back the money at the end. Right, Chris?)

Final Note: Two different conversations, with overlapping themes, the most predominant being "Abundance isn't all about money and 'stuff.'" It's such a rich topic for financial advisors and anyone else who thinks about the role of money and 'wealth' in our lives. I'm sure we'll touch more upon Abundance in future Open Mic hours. Meanwhile, in this season of celebration, when we're bombarded with non-stop advertising equating abundance with gift-wrapped objects, I wish you and yours all the joy and well-being you can handle. And some cool stuff, too.

Ed

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