

The birthday lessons from my year

By: Veronica Cool ⌚ January 29, 2016



COOL TIPS

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On my birthday, I found myself in Washington, D.C, putting in a 16-hour day. And I had a smile on my face. You see, I was investing in my future.

I tend to celebrate my birthday the whole month ... Actually, I never stop celebrating. The joy of another year of experiences, laughter, lessons, friendships, solutions — I love it.

The actual birthday is a check-in point, a slight pause, where I assess the journey, my frame of mind and my contentment. This particular birthday came brimming with generous gifts. Mother Nature bought me winter storm Jonas, which in turn, graciously closed school for a full week. And my little barbarians gifted me truckloads of drama, “don’t touch me’s”, jokes, cuddles and more drama. And I had a smile on my face.

Being snowbound, I managed to assess the journey so far and the lessons from this past year:

- **STOP:** Stop filling the schedule with busyness. Stop wasting energy on ineffective, unhappy, annoying, costly habits, meetings, activities, or relationships. Period. You would be surprised how much time becomes available when you stop dealing with the nonsense.
- 2016 is gearing up to be a year to scale my consulting practice significantly. I’m excited about this process! And having the focus and energy to be engaged can only happen when there’s availability — so stop being busy for the sake of busy.
- **SAVOR:** Enjoy the moments. Savor the laughter, the jokes and stories. Build the snowman and then tackle said snowman.

Often our devices serve as masters of our times, with perpetual 24/7 access, but what a delight to see the notifications on email, Facebook, text. I savored every single birthday wish from friends – recalling where we had met, a shared experience, a crazy story.

- **SERENDIPITY:** One of my biggest “A-ha” learnings of 2015. Remove the restrictions of preconceived notions, the constraints we implement on ourselves that immediately remove us from opportunities. So, I started saying yes to exploration. I intentionally

seek to deepen relationships with those people that are changing the world, influencing and empowering the economy and community, both large and small.

Serendipity led me to collaborate with Melinda Wittstock, an award-winning journalist and brilliant entrepreneur. Her current company, Verifeed, deals in “social intelligence” — the science of using social media to learn about your customers, supporters, donors, etc. Verifeed then uses this intelligence to help clients craft targeted campaigns and grow their customer base.

She and I are delivering an “Engaging Hispanics” Master Class, marrying her expertise on social intelligence with our focus on Hispanic strategy to help companies build the bridge to the growing Hispanics market. Wait till you see it!!

- **USE YOUR VOICE** — and not just to order a burrito or burger from the drive-thru! Use your voice to connect people; use your voice to mentor a student; use your voice to get the right person elected into office; use your voice to stop a wrong; and the list goes on. We have power and influence that can be leveraged to improve someone’s situation, whether a client, a friend or a mentee.

And don’t worry if that voice has a heavy accent, or is too loud, or too anything. Just keep working on your delivery and your message will be heard.

- **BE FEARLESS:** When faced with a very tough decision, I quietly voiced my concern to Theresa Daytner, a sister, a mentor and fellow entrepreneur: “What if I fail?”

“That’s Stupid!” she responded, “have you ever failed at anything?” No, because you stop what is not working, fix it as you go along, make adjustments, pivot Being fearless is terrifying but not paralyzing. If it is not working, I adjust, I pivot.

- **ASK FOR HELP:** 1 plus 1 is not 2. It is more. No, don’t freak out, I won’t be referring to Common Core math and make you cry. Simply stated, asking for help will amplify your results.
- Recently, I reached out to the moderator of a panel I attended, asking her for some guidance on the best way to penetrate her industry. By the way, she is the president of a large food retailer in the east coast. I wanted to know under what conditions would her company be interested in engaging my firm to woo Hispanics. I was polite, and genuine- she dedicated 45 minutes and introduced me to 3 other execs in the industry.

See, 1 plus 1 is more than 2. All because I asked for help.

- **LAUGH:** I frequently put my foot in my mouth and raise a couple of eyebrows ... and get a few laughs along the way. Yes, I could be reserved.

But nope!

It turns out that my soul feeds off the infectious laughter of my family and children, the giggles and LOLs from friends and colleagues.

So the journey continues, and although I'm losing the battle with gravity and keep finding more gray-hair strands, I smile because this ride is epic.
Happy birthYEAR to me, amigos!

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