

## ***Personal Operating Systems At Work***

By: Marti Benjamin

I recently met with the owner of a local business to talk about collaborating on a Business Coaching program. I was suggesting that I would hold this seminar in his store, which would bring my coaching clients in to his business establishment, introducing them to his products and services, which were a perfect fit for the topic of the program. I saw this as a win-win: coaching clients would be learning something of value, be exposed to his service (which would also add value to their lives) and he would have the chance to build a relationship with people who had never used his service before. What could be better?

### **Danger Detector**

It did not work as I envisioned it. I felt uneasiness early on in our conversation. Boundaries—or, rather, barriers—started locking into place and what looked to me like a win-win was, to my surprise, being perceived as a win-lose, an attempt on my part to take unfair advantage.

I assumed that I had not communicated my intention clearly, so I tried again, highlighting the benefits both in revenue and from the marketing perspective. I inquired as to what, if anything might make this workable for him. That was when I noticed that faint scent of fear and desperation filling the space. He is struggling in his business and saw new ideas and different ways of doing things as a threat; he perceived danger and the possibility of loss, rather than opportunity and the likelihood of growth.

That desperation came from his operating system, the mental framework of beliefs, values and thoughts that triggered his emotions; in this case, fear that he would lose something. I felt misunderstood and accused of something that was not even close to my intention. I lost interest in collaborating on this new program. I felt distrusted and I responded by being less trusting and open.

### **The Center of the System**

As I have thought about that experience and puzzled at how this smart business man was blinded by his desperation, I have begun paying closer attention to operating systems at work.

My first insight was that the OS is such an ingrained part of who we each are that we do not even notice its existence most of the time. How often do you consider which OS is making your desktop or laptop computer run? What once was a major technological advance has now faded into the background of our awareness and is taken for granted. We have stopped questioning it, just accepting that it functions correctly.

My next observation was that upgrading an operating system is a major transformation. My colleagues and friends in the world of technology shudder at the thought of changing the very core of the computer, 'It can't be done without destroying everything! If you change the OS, everything has to be built from the ground up.'

I agree—changing the OS does change everything. That is a good thing when we are talking about the human experience. It is the origin of personal growth and development.

### **Changing the OS**

As the home of values and beliefs, our personal operating system drives thoughts, feelings and behavior in every day life, in moments both large and small. If we operate from the belief that the world is a dangerous place, we generate thoughts of self-protection and feelings of fear. We behave as though we are under siege at all times. From beliefs come the thoughts that generate the feelings that determine the experience we will have.

- *What is your operating system doing for your life?*
- *How would your experience change if you upgraded your operating system?*
- *How would it be to live from the place of possibility?*

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