

WRITE YOUR OWN EPITAPH

Coca-Cola provided youth leaders with one of the most strategic leadership lessons of all time. In 1985, Coke introduced a “new and improved” formula of the popular soft drink, putting “NEW!” in a box on the can. The advertising campaign became one of our era’s biggest marketing debacles, as sales plummeted to record lows.

Top consultants, called in to determine why the plan had been an epic fail, told Coke executives: “You’ve got the wrong thing in the box.” (Code language for “You’re focusing on the wrong thing.”) After lengthy debate, something else went in the box, and the result was a tremendous success. The new words were simply “Coca-Cola Classic.”

Here’s my question: What’s in your box? In other words, what serves as ground zero for your life? What do you eventually want to be the signature of your run here on earth? As St. Augustine taught, the beginning of true adulthood is asking yourself, “What do I wish to be remembered for?”

Use these four questions to determine your life’s signature:

1 How do you want people to remember you? Although none of us knows when we’ll die, with some planning we can each write our own epitaph. What key themes would you like echoed at your funeral?

2 What do you enjoy doing so much that you’d still do it without pay? Maybe it’s using creative vehicles to reach people for Christ. Maybe it’s working with technology. Or equipping leaders. Whatever your wiring, be sure to prioritize it when determining what’s in your box. After all, God created each of us to *enjoy* his destiny for our lives.

3 What are you internally passionate about? Or, as my grandfather used to ask, “What cranks your tractor?” For me, it’s mentoring kingdom leaders. For you, it’s probably something different. Just devote a reasonable portion of focused time to things beyond the mundane and trivial.

4 Finally, what steps do you need to take to reorient your priorities? Peter Drucker wisely reminds us: “Do first things first, and second things not at all.”

As you consider what’s in your box, just beware: Not to choose is to choose. You can keep the box empty for only so long. If you don’t choose your one thing, life’s busyness will choose it for you.

So get busy writing your own epitaph. It’s truly a life-changing decision. ●

Epitaph here!

