

Commentary: A Standard of Excellence  
By Sidney Gaskins, President/CEO Enterprising Life, LLC.

Understanding the phrase “a standard of excellence” involves understanding the words “standard” and “excellence.” I often used words with little thought given to their true meaning. We’ve probably all heard people throw around the word “love” to the point that it has lost its meaning. We “love” coffee, our pets, that jacket, those shoes, and even people we barely know. So, I wonder if we business experts say we have “a standard of excellence” without truly understanding what it is.

I’ve learned that a standard can be defined in multiple ways. At one point, a standard was a banner carried during times of war; it served as a rallying point, or an emblem to gather the troops. It was also a personal flag; one of a royal family, or organization. Have you seen the flag of the royal family of England? They call it the Royal Standard. Another definition for ‘standard’ is “Something set up and established by authority as a rule for measure.”

More often than not we are given standards for things by an authority. For example, a standard ruler is twelve inches; a standard work day is eight hours; a standard pregnancy is said to last for nine months; and your standard date is dinner and a movie. These standards were set by someone else. I do not know who, yet I’ve followed them readily and without question. Most of us live unconsciously off of and by the standards set by others.

However, we can raise the banner, flag, standard of our own lives. In looking at my life, relationships, business, and family, I realized that even though there were standards, they may need to be changed. “Why?” Well, the standards by which I live may have been good for a different time. They are established to give structure, support, and stability. So, at different times in life I have found a need for a different level of structure, support, and stability. Standards give us those three things; the question is “To what standard do you hold yourself?” If your standard is excellence, then the next step is to find out what it means to be excellent.

Excel, the root word of excellent, means “to rise, project.” To excel is to surpass in accomplishments or achievement, to be distinguishable by superiority. Superiority is not arrogant or egotistical. This superiority speaks for itself, there are no words necessary, and it has integrity, is confident, well put together, and moves with purpose. Excelling is going beyond your stated or implied limit set by an authority or established by a custom or tradition, and even past achievements. To excel I must push further than what I’m asked, transcending what is thought, moving past the norm to reach another level, outdoing my own past, and create competition. Competition where there is only one person in the game, Me. Excelling is continual. It is perpetual. There is no place called Excel City. It is a verb. I’m continually breaking through the ceiling called *standard*, *status quo*, or *good enough* to create **excellence**.

A group of friends and I have made it our goal to read *Secrets of the Millionaire Mind* by T. Harv Eker together. In the book he speaks about the mindset it takes not just to make money, but to be what you want to be. One thing that I know is that it takes stretching beyond what I think of myself and even others; stretching beyond what I’ve been told or heard. No matter what we

think, it is a mindset, a place where you can live perpetually through excelling, being in motion, moving past yesterday; it takes motion to create excellence.

You are the authority that creates how you will measure the quantity and quality of the time you give to tasks, people, and things. You determine the priorities in your life and place value on the various people and things in that life. Only you can exceed standards set by authorities and yourself. Only you can push yourself past the baseline you have created. To have a life worth living, excelling must be one of the stones on which you build all aspects of your life.

Set “A Standard of Excellence” in your intimate relationships, in money management, with your health, in keeping your home, in dealing with and in your community, in communication, in your business and career, and see how things begin to come alive in your life. Raise the Standard. Have a Standard of perpetual motion, outdoing self to the next level daily – that is the Standard of Excellence. Go beyond the norm; be distinguishable; and be excellent.