

Baltimore smart CEO

Required Reading for Growing Companies

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2100 Aliceanna Street, 2nd Floor

Baltimore, MD 21231

Phone: 410-342-9510

Fax: 410-342-9514

www.smartceo.com

Publisher: Craig Burris

Editor: David Callahan



CEO Shintaido

caskey's corner

By Wayne Caskey

for Smart CEO

The profitable path of dreams fulfilled

Come with me to a hilltop in northern California, well north of San Francisco, on the edge of a redwood forest, with early morning ocean fog nestling in the valleys. We're here as part of a leadership course, and it's 8 a.m. on the first day.

We begin with Shintaido, a form of Japanese bodywork. We are nearing the autumnal equinox and the rising sun is almost directly in front of us. Our leaders call out "spring", "newness"---words symbolizing the East. They challenge us to supply our own.

We are in the midst of:

Shintaido to the East

We call out: "To birth! To rebirth! To new possibility! To fresh shoots coming out of the ground! To fresh air! To ideas germinating! To first flowers!"

Where in my CEO experience do I find this? I remember the childcare start-up. My associates and I are all new to the venture or renewed for it. The ideas are fresh. Our very service is for young children. We are idealistic, eager and vigorous. Anything is possible. We

are going to do it differently and right! Our caring will be true caring! And my challenge as CEO is to keep this spirit alive through the ups and downs of the first year and pass it on to those who succeed me, and succeed.

Our leaders now turn to the South, the place of the noon day sun. They call out: "Summer! Heat!"

And we respond to their challenge:

Shintaido to the South

"To the jungle! To steaminess! To lust! To lushness! To fecundity! To animal power!"

My CEO experience: In the heat of Texas, I take over a mid-sized Tex-Mex restaurant operation. We serve hot, spicy food, in rooms with whitewashed walls and fireplaces which are lit below 60 degrees, and mariachi music piped in. And in the second year, we build and we acquire and the operation mushrooms. Double the units, double the revenue, double the profits. We swashbuckle through the marketplace,

and we win our duels in the acquisition forest. And my challenge as CEO is to keep the heat on, and lead the swashbuckling charge for bigger, better and more profitable.

Now we turn to the West, the place of the setting sun, and our leaders call out: "To autumn! To the harvest!"

We respond to their challenge:

Shintaido to the West

"To blazes of color! To trees laden with apples! To overflowing cornucopia! To thanksgiving! To fullness! To well-earned rest! To maturation! To ease!"

My CEO experience: Here I'm a Group V. P. of Operations. Our multi-division Fortune 500 has just blown the roof off an ambitious budget. We are all visiting our Pretzel Division in Lancaster to celebrate our collective triumph. There is much wine and much toasting. And our CEO tells us to enjoy the evening fully, which we do, and the time seems to stretch out endlessly before us

as we reminisce and savor our triumph.

Now we turn to the North and our leaders call out: "To midnight! To winter!"

We respond to their challenge:

Shintaido to the North

"To death! To destruction! To endings! To being buried in deep snow! To hibernation! To cold!"

My CEO experience: The Boston commercial finance company needs to be liquidated; the bright hopes of the prior year are dashed, the family atmosphere fractured, the founders ousted by their Board, the stockholders furious and looking for blood. There are rumblings of criminal indictments and the FBI is called in. As the newly promoted CEO, my challenge is to initiate the salary cuts (starting with my own), deal with the aftermath of a Director's suicide, dismiss 60 percent of the work force (all of whom I know well), find a buyer, and close down the operation. The inner challenge is to keep my eyes on

the objective in the midst of chaos.

Our leaders look down and call out to Mother Earth, and challenge us again.

We respond to their challenge:

Shintaido to Mother Earth

"To dirt; To rocks; To streams, lakes, rivers, oceans; To mountains; To valleys; To deserts; To mine shafts; To lava; To volcanoes; To moss under our feet; To ferns in the forest; To support; To groundedness; To earthiness; to loveliness."

The Milwaukee environmental cleanup of the earth and the streams and the lake is emerging from the planning phase. The initial tax bills to pay for it are sent out, and a firestorm of protest breaks. My challenge as Chairman of the Commission is to remain grounded in the midst of the media blitz, celebrate the groundswells of the democratic process, and keep firmly on the path to a cleaner environment.

Our leaders call to Father Sky and challenge us again.

We respond to their challenge:

Shintaido to Father Sky

"To the deepest blue; To unfathomable black; To birds; To hawks; To eagles; To planes; To clouds; To stars; To rainbows; To falling snow and ice; To hail; To infinite possibility; To unlimited potential; To the universe; To unlimited expansion; To spaciousness."

A CEO I know develops an oral rehydration product. It has multiple uses in health care, sports and defense. She's now ready to take it to full commercial production. Her face shines with the spaciousness of the vista she sees. Her challenge is to secure the funders who will rise with her to the possibilities.

Our leaders call to the Center of our circle and give us the final challenge. We respond to the challenge:

Shintaido to the Center

"To community; To love; To honor; To respect; To individuality;

To focus; To warmth; To humor; To unfoldment; To balance; To centeredness; To delight."

My first senior management team is a delight. I encourage all inquiries. I don't tolerate territoriality. I make it clear that the staff is here to serve the line and for no other purpose, and that I expect the line to be thankful and grateful for the fine staff help it receives. Everyone has ideas on the functions of others, which we use as building blocks for better staff service and line execution. I celebrate them, and they celebrate each other and me. We are a true community.

* * *

The latest book by Hiroyuki Aoki, founder of Shintaido, defines this discipline as body work that makes it possible to realize one's true self. As CEOs we can choose to view our experience, whether it be to the East in a start-up, to the South in a roaring success, to the West in reaping the harvest of well-laid and well-executed plans, to the North in a

disastrous liquidation, to Mother Earth with groundedness in the midst of the fire, to Father Sky with unwavering vision and patience, or to the Center with individual and collective growth and give-and-take, as arenas where our true selves, our passionate centers, can emerge to lead. We can open ourselves, not resisting the experiences we are in, drink of them deeply, ponder them well, and watch the leadership present in our true selves emerge.

Wayne Caskey is a three-time CEO who is now an executive coach. He wants to acknowledge three sources used in his research:

Pacific Shintaido

www.pacshin.shintaido.org

CoActive Leadership Program of CoActive Space

www.coactivespace.com

Charlene Riikonen, Managing Director/CEO, Cera Products LLC

www.ceralyte.com