
OPINION

Fortunate People Make Their Own Luck

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The world of science and medicine is full of serendipitous discoveries. The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines serendipity as a lucky tendency to find interesting or valuable things by chance and the discovery of Penicillin falls under this definition.

Alexander Fleming's groundbreaking discovery occurred when he was working in a London hospital in 1928. He noticed a plate culture of Staphylococcus had been contaminated by a blue-green mold, which was having a destructive affect on the adjacent colonies of bacteria. Curious, he grew the mold in a pure culture and discovered it produced a substance that killed disease-causing bacteria.

The discovery of vaccination was also a chance event. English physician Edward Jenner was looking at women workers, and not through a microscope, when he stumbled upon his theory. He wondered why milkmaids had not catch smallpox, and this lead him to discover that they had caught a benign cowpox first.

More recently, the anti-impotence drug Viagra (sildenafil citrate) was initially designed to treat hypertension and angina pectoris. Phase-one clinical trials, under the direction of Ian Osterloh, suggested the drug had little effect on angina, but that it could induce marked penile erections (Wikipedia).

Many of my candidates understand how happy accidents can steer them on the right path to their dream job. These people also made their own luck. Some of the most fruitful opportunities happened because seeds were sown and time was allowed to run its course.

Much has been written on the importance of setting goals, visualizing and taking the necessary action. The required action is often a chance meeting or discussion, that at the time, may appear fruitless.

I met with a 42-year-old consultant at a Pharma Delegates lunch at the Tokyo American club. He had a dream of running a start-up, in which he could utilize his consulting and clinical experience. He was disappointed it was still only a dream. We discussed the ideal company for him in broad terms and culture. After we parted, I thought it was tough ask. This type of opportunity had not ever come across my desk. I kept in touch with the

consultant through our articles and we met for lunch a few times. Undeterred, he would sometimes remind me: "If anything came up I would keep an open mind".

His positive and hopeful vision was soon rewarded. I had met with an ERP software company that services the pharmaceutical business and it was looking for a national manager. The head of sales detailed the job description and it was perfect for our candidate. After two meetings the deal was done, and only a quick trip to New York was required to have Head Quarters sign off on the hire.

My candidate's dream of being a national manager for an IT Pharmaceutical start-up may not be on par with the discovery of Penicillin and Viagra, however, the principals of lateral thinking are the same.

The candidate was looking for opportunities and his search led him to a Pharma Delegates lunch. He was not rewarded immediately, however a seed was planted and it wasn't too long before his dream job came to fruition.

Four ways to fruitful fulfillment

Have a clear vision.

Keep an open mind

Meet people, we never know when or where opportunities will arise

Take action, have courage to pursue your goal