



Jim Huling

Speaker & Topic: “What Men Can Learn from Women - Choose Your Life” featuring Jim Huling, CEO of Matrix Resources, one of the 50 largest technology service companies in America, winner of the 2007 Gold Medal for Customer Service Excellence Award, and for the past 3 years, one of the “25 Best Small Companies to Work for in America.” Also an author/ nationally recognized speaker / motivator extraordinaire & an honored leadership role model / recipient of Turknett's "Leadership Character Award." New book: *Choose Your Life*

Jim began by saying: “The deepest questions, the ones that really matter, are those that can only be answered from the heart. Without question, women’s organizations and particularly women in leadership are the audiences that I find most willing to embrace these questions, consider them deeply, and answer them authentically. Today is the 9th time I have spoken to women’s leadership group and I have consistently found them to be the most thoughtful and passionate audiences.”

Lesson #1: The willingness to consider the important “life” questions is something men can learn from women.

Poem by Welsh poet, David White: Questions – Jim shared it with the group.

Jim’s near death experience: April 25, 2005 he had a heart attack and went into cardiac arrest. Up until then he was on top of the world, in his business and his personal life. But this experience gave him a new perspective: he thought if I’m about to die, I can die with “NO REGRETS. I’ve lived the life I wanted to live.” Obviously, he didn’t die but he uses this example to challenge others to think “would I have any regrets?”

For Jim it wasn’t always that way. Years ago, he worked for one of the “Big 8” accounting firms, “a cult” he called it. The message embedded in the firm was “Your job is the single most important thing.” And, Jim lived as though that were true. He traveled constantly and was away from his wife and baby daughter (and later, a son too) all the time. One night in a Montgomery, AL in a Marriott Courtyard hotel room, he became very introspective. Thought: “What would my daughter say one day about the kind of

dad I was to her??” That thought and the writing that he did that night literally changed his life forever.

Lesson #2: 3 Questions: Three questions he came up with – which are also the thesis of his new book, *Choose Your Life*, are the ones that he asked himself that night in Montgomery.

WHO AM I?

WHAT DO I REALLY WANT?

WHAT AM I PREPARED TO DO?

To answer the first question, one needs to write down everything you think that defines you in terms of relationships, positions, interests, talents, dreams, etc. Jim’s book walks you through this process with forms to guide you. You also have to prioritize those things, think about the time you spend on them, and grade yourself on how you’re doing. For example, if your relationship with your spouse or your children is your top priority, is that getting the right proportion of your time and energy?? Do you get an A or an F?

Most of us aren’t in the proper “synch” with our priorities. Certainly work and our professions are important, but do we live to work or work to live? One issue in our increasingly complex lives is not being able to say NO. It’s been said that we continually add more “to do’s” to our daily lives when actually, we should say 3 NO’s for every 1 YES! Trying to adjust our priorities may require fundamental changes in our lives --- and that’s scary. What we need to do is write down our values, do an honest assessment and become accountable; writing them down helps with accountability.

Lesson # 3: When everything’s a priority, nothing really is.

For the next question, “What do I really want?” – You need to get some real clarity about exactly where you’re going. For Jim, he knew he wanted his daughter to be able to say, “My dad’s always been there for me.” That night in Montgomery, he wrote 14 pages of his **LIFE VISION**. To make that happen, to have more control over his life and time, he resigned from the “Big 8” firm. He now had his life vision... and that compelled him to live it out.

Not everything changes at once, it evolves and changes over time...incremental things you do in the direction of your life vision make the difference.

Lesson #4: If you know what you want you have a good chance of getting there. You need to be clear and focused however.

You also need to manage your energy as much as your time. We don’t always think about the energy factor, we just try to schedule according to how much time we have. But if you schedule high priority things when your energy is spent, you’re not going to be as effective.

Individuals from the Women In Leadership group shared some of their life visions / what someone would say about them after they are gone:

“She loved, caring, fun and adventurous.”

“I helped my spouse realize all of his/her dreams.”

“My grandchildren would say: She always loved me no matter what.”

Next question: What am I prepared to do? Is there a GAP between what you want and where you are? Probably so and it can be overwhelming. For the past 30 years, Jim has stopped on the way home on Friday afternoon and brought flowers to his wife. Why? Because she’s a top priority in his life and he wants her to know it. He says it’s a small action but...

Lesson #5: The cumulative power of small steps or actions taken consistently over time in a clear direction is tremendous.

Lesson #6: Every day, every week, every month and every year we choose our lives by what we do. You don’t have to climb the mountain of change tomorrow, just take incremental, small steps in the right direction.

It is certainly important to have a vision statement for yourself as a leader, but also in other parts of your life. If you don’t fill up your life and time with your own priorities, the business/company will surely fill it up for you.