

# Opinion

## Giving advice to your younger self. The benefits of time

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

What do you give the man who has everything? You give him 40 years of hindsight.



Grubaugh

LinkedIn, the world's largest networking platform for business people, recently asked participants one of the most thought-provoking questions I've seen in a while.

What advice would you give your younger self? In other words, what things would you have done differently if you'd had a crystal ball?

Wow! Where to begin? At the age of 65, I've piled up enough no-nos to fill a book. But then, haven't we all?

I guess you could start with the obvious — do unto others. If we all practiced that, we would have none of the non-sense that goes on in the world. There are certain things you must practice from birth, like getting along with people, taking care of yourself, being responsible.

I could share plenty of bad decisions

from my teen years, but I think it best if I give my advice to my 25-year-old self. Twenty-five is the point where we are old enough to make decisions that shape the rest of our lives. It's the pivotal time when most people go right professionally, wrong personally and somewhere in between if they're blessed with children. (Or, they go wrong professionally and right personally. The child thing is a gamble regardless.)

My first bit of advice to my younger self would be to exercise more patience. It is indeed a virtue, and those who are able to hold their tongue when they're younger find they'll live long enough to give their opinion more freely (and more wisely) when they're old. Saying the wrong thing at the wrong time can ruin a career, kill a relationship, break up a business or bring on lasting consequences. In the heat of the moment, count to 10.

My second piece of advice is to place more importance on first impressions. That is, how people perceive you. We rarely get a second chance to make them, and stray, positive encounters can shape lives in ways you'll never imagine. If you dress like a slob, people will think you're generally a slob. If you dress to impress, you attract positive attention. If you open the door for others, more doors will be open for you.

A third thought: Be more open minded. A closed mind is a terrible thing to waste time on. I think back on advice I ignored because I already had an opinion formulated, on everything from people to places to foods. Assumptions can be terribly wrong without the facts to base them on. And by the time you reach old age, you're sorry for things you missed along the way. Besides that, we all know what ass-u-me means.

Here's another: Never have "a failure to communicate." Communication is the reason most people get along and lack of it the reason most people fall apart. One-on-one discussions resolve most problems. At the very least they serve as a bridge so that people understand each other better. Refusing to communicate almost guarantees frustration.

Speaking of bridges, my lifelong motto has always been, "never burn one," because you can never tell when you have to cross back to the other side. That's possibly the hardest thing for we humans. Living a life of any kind of complexity almost assures that you'll eventually cross swords with someone. In the end, if you work hard to keep connections, you'll find the resulting support network makes life that much easier.

Lastly, ignore the caterwauling and treasure the calm. There is a lot of opinion out there and much of it has no basis in fact. People who speak with shrill voices get attention, but seldom do they get much respect. Forget reliance on social media for the truth. You simply won't find it. Social media is good, though, for passing along pet pictures.

I supposed there are a million tidbits we could all share given the chance. Never stop learning. Marry right. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it — and don't be too proud to take help when it's offered.

Anyone of maturity has been around long enough to regret both the roads taken and those not. The best advice will always be to treat people with dignity. Pay attention to important people for what they are doing. Pay more attention to lesser people for who they are. A wise man once said, "I speak to everyone in the same way whether he is the garbage man or the university president." Old Albert Einstein. Wise indeed.

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## Municipal lust for sales tax dollars leads to bad decision making

By ALAN J. ORTBALS

I have long been an advocate of consolidating the city of Edwardsville and the village of Glen Carbon. They are two similar municipalities that share a common border that zigs and zags so that you're never quite sure where the line even is.



Ortbals

They share a common school district, too, but they have their own police and public works departments along with

elected officials and enough administrative personnel to keep everything running. But essentially, it is one community divided by artificial lines and those lines create inefficiencies, waste tax dollars and foment competition rather than collaboration. They also cause them to make decisions that are perhaps in the best interest of municipal government but not in the best interest of the community at large.

A case in point is the proposed Orchard Town Center development on the former Foucek nursery property on

Troy Road. The 52-acre retail development will be anchored by a Menards Home Improvement store on the west side of the property with outlots lining the north and east sides along Troy Road and Governor's Parkway. According to Tim Lowe, vice president of development and leasing for developer The Staenberg Group, the outlots could be populated by a variety of things including fast food restaurants, urgent care facilities and other types of services.

I fully understand why the Village Board supports this development. It's going to generate lots of sales tax dollars for the village's coffers and help to pay for those municipal services I mentioned above. But a town center it is not. Which is a shame. It's simply adding another big box home improvement retailer to a market that is already saturated.

If you consider the community as a whole, you can see how ideally situated this property is and, by the way, it's the only one like it that's left. If developed properly, it really could be a town center for a consolidated Edwardsville-Glen Carbon. In the commercial real estate business, such a property is referred to as being at the "corner of Main and Main" to signify its perfect location.

A consolidated municipal government would reject the Menards-anchored

plan and might pursue an entirely different model that would be a true town center and focal point for the larger community. For example, what if the property was devoted to a pedestrian friendly development focused around a lake and offering a variety of shops, pubs, restaurants, etc. creatively designed to maximize human interaction and offer an old town ambiance. That's something that would not need an anchor tenant. It would be a magnate all on its own. And it would be a development worthy of the kind of financial support that Glen Carbon is providing to the developers.

For a time, the city and the village came together under the Alliance of Edwardsville and Glen Carbon to collaborate on planning and economic development. But that endeavor foundered on the rocks of the proposed STAR Bonds development.

In case you've forgotten, in the late aughts local developers proposed a mega development roughly at the intersection of Illinois Routes 157 and 162 in Glen Carbon. It was frequently referred to as the STAR Bonds Project borrowing that moniker from a Kansas financing tool (Sales Tax and Alternative Revenue) that was created by the Sunflower State when it was competing with Missouri for the development of

a NASCAR racetrack. The idea was to create a district much larger than the track required and pack it with major retailers that would spin off enough sales tax to subsidize the development of the track and thereby win the duel with Missouri.

The Glen Carbon developers proposed everything from a Nebraska Furniture Mart to a Legoland amusement park, but it was met with staunch opposition, particularly from the city of Edwardsville. Local mayors and state legislators took sides and went to the mat over what was to be called the University Town Center. Finally, the developers gave up and called it quits in April 2010.

I don't know if the University Town Center was real or a pipe dream, but it never had a chance because of the competition between the two municipalities.

Edwardsville and Glen Carbon aren't unique. I'm sure you can think of examples in your own communities. As long as cities and towns lust for sales tax dollars, their judgement will be impaired. Consolidation won't make competition between municipalities go away, but it will diminish it — and save tax dollars in the process.

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