

I Finally Found My Mourning Cloak

By Jim Kirkpatrick, PhD



The Mourning Cloak

When I was five years old and sick with the chicken pox, my dad came home from a golf outing with a present for me – a bright yellow tiger swallowtail butterfly that he had found dead on the golf course. That was the start of a fun childhood hobby with my dad and brothers – collecting butterflies.

A year later, when we were living in Park Ridge, Illinois, I was walking through a small apple orchard near our house. Fluttering around a fallen apple was a beautiful, royal purple, gold, and blue butterfly called a mourning cloak. I had never seen a more stunning butterfly, so I decided to catch it and take it home with me. Fortunately, I had brought a net.



Apparently the mourning cloak decided it did not want to be caught, so it took to flight – and the chase was on. It flew just fast enough to keep ahead of me.

After running through neighbors' yards and flowering fields, and being totally out of breath (both of us), I finally caught it. I had my prize – only to see it escape moments later through an undetected hole (undetected by me) in my net, and soar out of sight. I spent the next few minutes sobbing while trying to catch my breath.

Wondering If There Is More

I think about that mourning cloak from time to time, and the sad little boy who wondered why

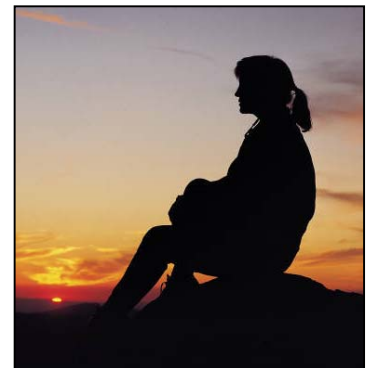
disappointments happen in life. I think about life and work in our world today, and sometimes wonder if there is more.

I even think about all the attention others and I give to such things as training, four levels, evaluation, business partnership, and demonstrating our value. Sometimes I wonder if all the books, articles, workshops and emails are really accomplishing what I hope they will.

The Realization

A few days ago, I was sitting in my house looking out the window after a rainstorm and, low and behold, resting on a flower outside my window was *my mourning cloak*. It was more beautiful than I remembered it fifty years ago when it disappeared into the sky.

My butterfly net is long gone, but my thrill at seeing one of God's beautiful creatures is not. This time I only wanted to admire the butterfly, not catch it. I realized that after decades of butterfly collecting, the act of collecting wasn't what was important. It was simply the beauty of the butterflies. This realization led me to think about my work in the same way. Is it about the actions we perform, or something else?



The Deeper Purpose Of Training

The Kirkpatrick Four Levels, transferring learning to behavior, building compelling chains of evidence, and Return on Expectations are my *job*. But the *deeper purpose* behind those actions is enriching lives. Sure, we as learning professionals need to be diligent and bold about applying the proven principles of the Kirkpatrick Model and performance management. The ultimate purposes, however, can

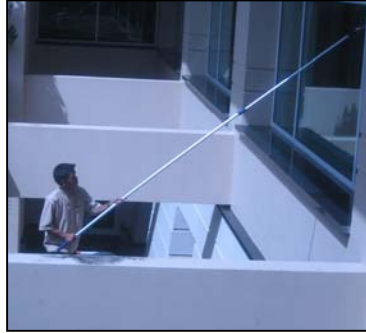
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go well beyond the application of learning, behavior, and bottom line results.

Chai, also known as the *Brunei Window Washer*, (read about him in our whitepaper, [The Kirkpatrick Four Levels: A Fresh Look After 50 Years](#)) reminds me that Don, my



wife Wendy, and I are ultimately in the business of helping people find meaning and purpose in their work through creating meaningful business impact.

Research clearly tells us that engaged and purpose-filled employees are more productive and less likely to leave an organization. There is nothing like hearing the testimonials of learning professionals, however, who have had a hand in adding meaning to lives of co-workers and colleagues by helping them to achieve their professional and organizational goals.

Calling All Ambassadors

If this is your introduction to the Kirkpatrick Community, welcome. We promise to provide you with not only the tools and techniques to implement an effective business partnership model, but how including the heart will lead to individual and collective legacies.



If you are familiar with our work, we hope you continue to be ambassadors interested in capturing the minds and hearts of those you come in contact with, and to more clearly see *your own* mourning cloak.

Jim Kirkpatrick, PhD is the Vice President of Global Training and Consulting for SMR USA. He presents workshops and provides consulting to Fortune 500 companies around the world. Jim's expertise includes corporate universities, career development center management, and consulting on evaluation, team building, coaching, and leadership. His specialty is the Kirkpatrick Business Partnership Model of training effectiveness.

Jim has co-written 3 books with his father, Don Kirkpatrick, the developer of the Kirkpatrick Four Level Evaluation Model. He has written a fourth book called *Training on Trial*, with his wife, Wendy. AMACOM Publishing will release it in late 2009.

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