



## turning managers into leaders

### **Merge's Monthly Mega Minute – January 2007**

Welcome to **Merge's Monthly Mega-Minute** - a bite-sized, yet substantial and practical, nugget of information that you can use immediately to enhance your professional and personal success.

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*Merge Gupta-Sunderji helps turn managers into leaders. Through engaging keynotes and facilitated workshops, she gives people specific and practical tools to achieve leadership and communication success. Contact her at [www.mergespeaks.com](http://www.mergespeaks.com) or 403-605-4756*

### **Marshmallows, self-discipline, and success**

Recently I was rereading Daniel Goleman's 1995 bestseller, *Emotional Intelligence*, in which he discussed the nature of success. I was reminded of Walter Mischel's famous 1960s marshmallow experiment in which people's relative success was shown to be directly related to their self-discipline as children. In the first stage of his experiment, Mischel offered each child in a preschool class a single marshmallow. He told them if they could wait 20 minutes before eating the marshmallow, he would give them a second marshmallow as a reward. Some kids just couldn't wait and ate the first marshmallow right away; others held out for a few more minutes before finally giving in to temptation, and still others waited the full 20 minutes and got two marshmallows. Mischel recorded these individual results, and in the second stage of his experiment went on to monitor these children's success throughout their lives. The final results were remarkable. As teenagers, the children who ate their first marshmallow immediately were stubborn, became frustrated easily, and had low self-esteem. As they continued into adulthood, they faced additional challenges, including a higher incidence of drug problems. On the other hand, those who managed to wait for their marshmallow had much better life outcomes. As teenagers, they not only dealt more effectively with academic challenges, but their SAT scores averaged 210 points higher than their less self-disciplined peers. As adults, they were more assertive, coped with stress better, and were viewed by others as trustworthy. More recent research substantiates Mischel's original experiment, and offers strong evidence of what many of us already know to be true – self-discipline plays a huge role in success.

As the new year begins, many of you are looking forward to what success will mean for you in the upcoming months. Consider self-discipline. The ability to resist the temptation of short-

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term rewards can lead to better long-term outcomes. Getting a good education takes hours of study and intense concentration ... in the short-term. Creating a successful business involves hard work, uncomfortable sales calls and financial discipline ... in the short-term. But ... if you are able to delay gratification in the context of a longer-term goal, you are more likely to create enduring success for both yourself and others.

My best wishes to you for a successful and prosperous new year!