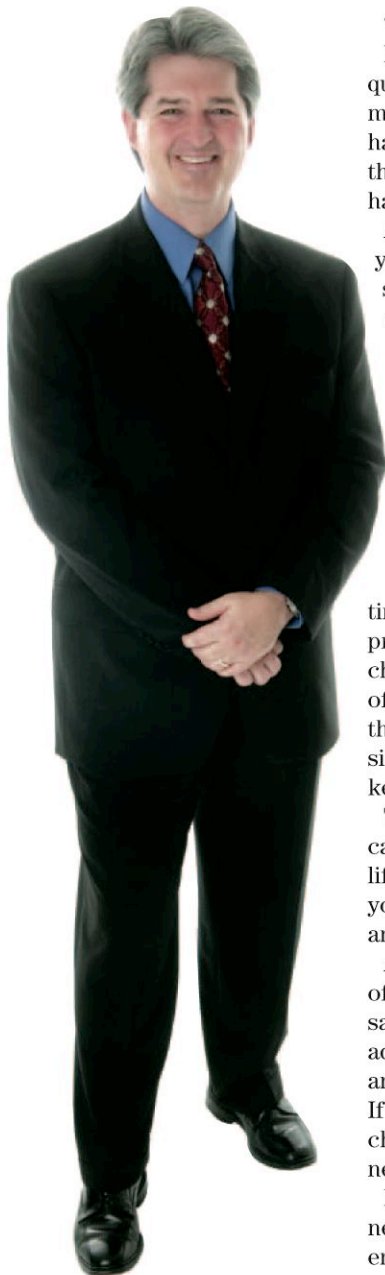


Take a courageous first step

Focus on the end to
unleash your
confidence to begin.



I stood barefoot before the glowing bed of coals, whose temperature had been measured at almost 2,000 degrees.

For the past six hours, I had been preparing for this moment, focusing my mind on a single objective: to cross 14 feet of burning coals without injury or pain. I believed I was ready, but now, with the heat rising to sting my face, I hesitated.

Doubts began to flicker across my mind as I tried to maintain my concentration.

"You're too old to do this."

"Maybe you should wait."

"You're not ready yet."

I almost walked away. Then I heard the quiet, steady voice of my teacher. He gave me a simple but profound instruction that has become one of my greatest lessons in the business of life: Focus on the end, have faith and take the first step.

Are you facing a moment of decision? As you envision the year ahead, is there something you've been waiting to do, something that you know would take your life to the next level of success and fulfillment, but now you are hesitating?

If so, your challenge is not in knowing what you want, it's in taking action to make it a reality. As I was in the moment before my fire walk, you can be tempted to wait, postponing your dreams for another day.

You may be telling yourself that the time is not right, or that you need more preparation, or, even worse, that your chance to be or do what you've dreamed of has passed you by. These are the lies that fear whispers in the moment of decision, and if you listen to them, they will keep you from beginning.

Think for a moment of the most significant things you've accomplished in your life, whether it's rising to a certain level in your career, mastering a skill, or nurturing and guiding your children.

Although you succeeded in the end, each of these accomplishments involved thousands of hours of effort, required you to adapt as a result of unexpected challenges and included the painful lessons of failure. If you had focused on all of this effort and challenge in the beginning, you might never have begun.

Instead of thinking about all that your new goal will require of you, focus on the end, on all that you want. Develop a com-

elling vision, then hold a clear and vivid image of the deep satisfaction you will feel when you've accomplished the goal. Focusing on the end will give you the energy and confidence to begin.

In each of the accomplishments you just thought about, was there a single one that you were completely prepared for when you began? Was there one for which you had already mastered the skills, had the experience, or didn't have to adapt to things you would never have expected?

Of course not, because what makes these accomplishments so meaningful is how much you grew in the process of achieving them.

Understanding how far you've come strengthens your faith in where you can go. As you face your new goal, know that you will again be guided in each step along the way, that you will again grow and develop and, most important, that you will persevere.

Have faith in yourself and in all you believe, and you will have the courage to begin.

Ultimately, everything you want comes down to your willingness to take the first step. All that you have accomplished so far, and all the joy and fulfillment it has brought, was only possible because there was a moment when you finally began to move forward.

My first step crossing the burning coals, with the intense heat all around me, is all I really remember before I arrived on the other side, unharmed. But the joy of that accomplishment, and the inner strength it created, has changed me forever.

When you finally realize that all the possibilities of your life are waiting for you to take the first step, you will have the strength to begin.

JIM HULING is CEO of The Jim Huling Group, a strategic consulting company enabling leaders and their teams to achieve extraordinary results. Jim's leadership experience spans over three decades, including eleven years as CEO of a leading technology company named multiple times as one of the "25 Best Small Companies to Work For in America." Jim is a nationally recognized keynote speaker and is also the author of *Choose Your Life!* a powerful proven method for creating the life you want, now available on Amazon.