

MY VIEW



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What Can Birds Teach Us About Building?

Like many of you, I've had plenty of time at home during the pandemic. Much of this time I've spent reading, meeting with friends, working, watching TV and writing. But because my office desks faces a big window, I must confess to spending time just looking out the window (*"Get a life,"* my wife says). As a result, I have become an accidental bird watcher. I observe birds taking baths in the bird bath, fighting with each other and sitting on electric wires. But my most enjoyable observations have been of birds building their nests.

It didn't take me long to realize that my "bird friends" could teach me a thing or two about the process of building things. Human beings are builders...we build programs, organizations, homes, relationships, wealth, and careers. So, what can we learn about building from birds...?

- **IT TAKES TIME:** It takes time for a bird to build a nest. They need to find the building material (twigs, branches, mud...), pull it out of the brush, fly it to the nest construction site, put it in just the right place and then repeat the process...day in and day out. As I watched this process, I found myself moving from impatience ("come on...hurry it up. It shouldn't be taking this long") to appreciating that nest building is hard work and time consuming.

The Building Lesson: Anything worth building (a TIP Chapter, a career, a relationship...) takes time. Builders need patience.

- **A NEST IS BUILT ONE TWIG/BLADE/LEAF AT A TIME:** Birds don't load up their beaks up with multiple materials. They find one little bit of building material at a time and fly that to the nest. The nest building is a step-by-step process of building with little things.

The Building Lesson: If I want to be successful at building something in my life, I need to be willing to focus on one activity at a time. Eventually these singular activities will come together as "the nest" I set out to build.

- **QUALITY COUNTS:** The reason it takes birds so long to build their nests is they are very selective about the materials they use and where they place them in the nest. I've witnessed birds spend what seemed like hours finding the "perfect" leaf they wanted, even if it was buried at the bottom of a pile. And then when they found the perfect leaf, they don't just drop their precious cargo onto the nest. They spent time placing it in just the right place.

The Building Lesson: To build a project in my life that will last there are no short cuts. Everything I do in the building process needs to be done “right” and with the utmost care.

- **A BIRD’S NEST IS BUILT BY ONE BIRD:** Building a nest is accomplished by one bird working alone. One bird takes on the nest building responsibility from beginning to end. Birds don’t wait to start their nests until other birds are willing to help. They don’t meet with other birds to discuss how to proceed. When a bird decides to build a nest, they just do it...alone.

Building Lesson: If I want to build something of value, I need to take the initiative to begin. Others may or may not think it’s a good idea. Others may or may not decide to join me. My building projects are mine and I have the responsibility as an individual to get them done. If those small birds can build great things by themselves, why can’t I?

BTW....only female birds build nests. Why? What are the males doing as the females are building the nests? I’ll leave it to each of you to speculate :)

- **BIRDS HAVE A STRONG REASON FOR BUILDING THEIR NESTS:** Nests for birds are not like homes for humans. Birds do not build nests to live in indefinitely. Birds build nest for one reason...for laying their eggs and for temporarily raising their offspring. This compelling purpose is what drives birds to spend the time doing the tedious work of building nests.

The Building Lesson: Before launching a particular project it’s important to ask “Do I have a strong enough purpose to propel me forward, especially when things get tough?” Without a strong purpose I will not be able to do the hard work that building a project requires.

Birds are extraordinary builders. They build nests. We build careers, relationships, wealth and more. We can learn from birds about successfully building the projects in our own lives. If birds could talk about building, I think they would say...

- Discover what you are passionate about.
- Take responsibility for your project. It’s your project. Don’t wait for the approval or cooperation of others. Building your nest may be a lonely journey.
- Have patience. Success is going to take longer than you think.
- Focus on the little things. They are the building blocks of your projects.
- Do the little things right. Don’t cut corners.