

The Grain of Sand

By Richard C. Randall

There was once a manager who had 5 equally qualified candidates apply for a single job. Each applicant, in sequence, was invited into the manager's office for an interview. After a brief introduction, the manager would take a small pinch of sand from a bag, and drop several grains on his desk. The manager would then say, "*These grains of sand each represent an opportunity. Choose one.*"

Applicant #1

The first applicant pointed toward a single grain of sand saying "*That one.*" In one movement, as if blowing out candles on a cake, the manager blew the sand off his desk where they all disappeared into the lightly colored office carpet.

The manager then asked, "*Which one?*". The confused applicant looked at the manager and replied, "*They're all gone.*"

To which the manager replied, "*Many opportunities exist for a limited time. And their potentials are only realized by those who take decisive action.*"

Applicant #2

The second applicant pointed toward a single grain of sand, and just as the first, said "*That one.*" Again, in one movement, the manager blew the sand off his desk where they were all lost in the lightly colored office carpet.

And again, the manager asked, "*Which one?*". The confused applicant looked at the manager and replied, "*I don't know. You blew them all onto the carpet.*"

To which the manager replied, "*Opportunities can be elusive. For those who lack focus, and fail to take initiative, they can easily become hidden. And much more difficult to find.*"

Applicant #3

The third applicant took one hand and swept all of the sand from the desktop into the palm of his other hand. Unfazed, the manager asked, "*Which one did you choose?*". The confident applicant proclaimed "*I'm a team player, and I assume that I will be assigned a team. So I'll have my team evaluate these opportunities to select the best one.*"

The manager replied, "*Delegating authority to others does not relieve you of responsibility. You were asked to perform a simple task. To choose a single grain of sand. Yet, you were so fearful of being held accountable for making a mistake, that you chose not to choose.*"

Applicant #4

The fourth applicant took one finger and pressed it against a grain of sand. Raising his finger, he proudly showed the manager the grain of sand, and declared, "*This one.*"

The manager replied, "*Excellent! Now tell me, what opportunity does that grain of sand represent?*"

The applicant appeared confused and sheepishly replied, "*I don't know.*"

To which the manager said, "*Opportunities are what you make of them.*"

Applicant #5

The fifth applicant, just as the fourth applicant, took one finger and pressed it against a grain of sand. Raising his finger, showing the manager the single grain of sand, he declared, "*This one.*"

The manager replied, "*Excellent! Now tell me, what opportunity does that grain of sand represent?*"

The applicant contemplated the question for a moment, and then confidently replied "*I want to be successful. And when someone successful tells me that something as innocuous looking as a grain of sand represents an opportunity, I listen. I want to work for a company that allows me to learn from the experience of others who can help me become successful. This grain of sand gave me the opportunity to describe those traits and ambitions, to you.*"