

The Game of Money

By Michael Di Lauro

“A finite game is in play when we view money as the most important outcome of our efforts. To view money as a trivial by-product derived from the gratification that we, and others, get from our efforts is to play an infinite game.”

In his book *Finite and Infinite Games*, James P. Carse argues that there are at least two types of games. He coins these *Finite Games* and *Infinite Games*.

A Finite Game:

In a finite game, there is always a winner and there are those who rank below the winner. A finite game has boundaries & limits (time & spatial limits, for instance). It has a clear beginning and an end. It has rules that, during the course of the game, do not change. Players in a finite game play to be bestowed with power and titles. Finite games are serious and consume time.

The object of a finite game is to win.

An Infinite Game:

Players in an infinite game don't play within limits or boundaries, they play with boundaries. Not only can the rules change in an infinite game, they must change. Infinite games are playful and generate time. In an infinite game a player plays with strength. Although there can be a finite game played within an infinite game, an infinite game cannot exist within a finite game.

The object of an infinite game is to keep the game in play.

This paper suggests how players in finite and infinite games might view their relationship with money. Furthermore, their view is constructed and framed within the WEL-Systems® Logical Levels of Thinking Model.

A Finite Player's View of Money

Spirituality/Purpose

Money benefits me and through me benefits others. By earning and accumulating more money, I can donate to charity, provide for my community, my family, and those less fortunate than me. Maximizing wealth always benefits society as a whole.

Identity

Money defines me and gives me a sense of accomplishment. Money publicly demonstrates who I have become and who I am, even further, capable of becoming. Even though there may be limits to my accumulation of wealth which prevent me from having the most money, I can still rank among the highest money-earners – and by extension one of the most influential people - in my community.

Choice

Money is the key criteria for determining options. When making a personal or career decision, I always select the option that maximizes money. Money also provides me with these choices: I can choose to accumulate it, spend it, display it, donate it or lend it. From these choices, I derive importance, status and self-worth. Without money those qualities are not available.

Beliefs, Values and Attitudes

Money gives me freedom. And that freedom makes me happy. Therefore money equates with happiness. Money is power. Power is bestowed upon me based on the money I generate. Even better is having more money than “my peers”. That will make me more powerful and therefore even happier.

Strategy

To attain happiness, I must first acquire money. To acquire money, I must work hard and long. I must be better than everyone else and I must be astute enough to be in the right place at the right time.

Behaviour

My behaviour is motivated by the money at stake. In other words, “What's in it for me?” I work hardest for those that pay me the most. I use every opportunity to hone and to demonstrate superior skills. This entitles me to demand and acquire more money. I make generous donations and confer lavish gifts upon those that give me the most recognition. I am less tolerant of those that I perceive to have less money than I do.

Environment

I always put in long hours (at school and at work). One must pay one's dues and the rewards will come.

An Infinite Player's View of Money

Spirituality/Purpose

The purpose of my infinite game is to be playful and to keep the game in play. Keeping the game in play requires the contribution of other infinite players. The right people and the right community are key factors. Money is not an overriding factor in my game, it ebbs and flows. This is a natural occurrence and does not influence how I interact with others. There is no need to have a desired outcome or a strategy of benefiting others. The strategy of benefiting others is a rationale - an excuse - for my behaviour in a finite game. Benefiting others is an automatic consequence of my infinite game.

Identity

Money does not define me. Money is a finite game that I may sometimes play within my infinite game. I am defined not so much by the content of my game but rather the context of my game. My game is an extension of who I am and my interest is to keep my game in play. In my infinite game, there is no need for veiling or cloaking who I am or what my purpose is.

Choice

I choose to do that which must be done to keep my game in play. My choice is to not look at my options in terms of the money they generate, my choice is to look at my alternatives in terms of keeping my game in play. By keeping my game in play (and keeping my game a playful one), others will choose to join me in my infinite game.

Beliefs, Values and Attitudes

It's not about money, it's about the game. I value the game, not the outcome. I believe that the players, the experience, the unknown - the surprises - are more important than money.

Strategy

My infinite game is, by definition, playful. There is no need to strategize for money. My strategy is to keep the game in play and to draw as many other infinite players into my game. There may be a sub-strategy to acquire the required resources (including money) when they ebb. This finite game is a short-term, finite tactic within the strategy of my larger infinite game.

Behaviour

My behaviour remains constant. My true self is present whether I'm engaged with a finite player or an infinite player. When I'm engaged with a finite player (whose strategy might be to maximize their earnings), I behave according to the principles (as I currently define them) of my infinite game. As long as my infinite game's overall strategy is not jeopardized, I continue to engage (this behaviour is as a short-term finite game within my infinite game). If my infinite game is being undermined, I will disengage. My behaviour is always initiated by my Identity, my Beliefs, Values and Attitudes and my strategy, and is not influenced by the desire to obtain money

Environment

Because it defines me, my game is always in play. Whether I'm in a social or organizational environment, my interest is to keep the game in play.

Michael Di Lauro, WEL-Systems NLP Practitioner and Quantum TLC™ Facilitator, CMA specializes in helping businesses and non-profit organizations consider a whole new view of what money and financial management is all about for them. Mike brings a creative, thought-provoking and playful perspective to a topic that many find serious, tedious or unnerving. Mike enjoys his role as a financial writer and educator. He has developed a definitive QuickBooks® training guide currently used in community college courses and has authored the "Game of Money" article. He leads QuickBooks® training sessions as well as "Minding Your Dollars and Cents"™, a workshop for small businesses. For more information, visit www.dilauro.ca

Copyright© 2005 Michael Di Lauro. This article may be reproduced provided permission has been granted by the author and it is reproduced in its entirety with appropriate acknowledgement of the author, the source and weblinks to www.WEL-Systems.com and www.dilauro.ca