



Joe Kittel

*Sometimes life drags me kicking and screaming
to precisely where I truly want to be*

Below is my story, focused on spiritual growth and framed for strategic alliance managers. To some this document may seem arrogant. To be clear I am striving for a tone of grandeur rather than grandiosity.

You are reading this because you are interested in knowing more about me and my life. You likely know me mostly through my website, resume and writings; maybe from others. Maybe you want to better understand my life experiences and my successes and failures as a strategic alliance manager, teacher, consultant and coach. You'd like to better understand my ideas around spirituality and how they might apply in strategic alliances.

Strong Self-will – As the youngest of four competitive swimmers, I can intensely compete and I often win. Competitiveness served me well in business – for a while.

Deep Thinker – In college I studied electrical engineering, graduating magna cum laude. I love calculus and physics. I am attracted to *fundamental principles*; they explain how things really work. Once the fundamentals are clear, past experiences make sense, new problems become solvable, and we start seeing how things unfold and interconnect – how they evolve across time and connect across space.

HP – In the early '80s Hewlett-Packard (HP) was *the* company to work for. HP was very selective, hiring the best and brightest engineers. I felt this was a place where I could best capitalize on my competitive intellect.

Strategic Alliances – In the mid-'80s I heard about strategic alliances and was deeply intrigued. Alliancing was seen as an artful science. I was attracted to the ever-changing challenges in alliancing. I was intrigued to hear that most alliances failed and no one knew precisely why; their fundamental principles were illusive.

For more than 16 years I have established, developed and managed strategic alliances on behalf of most of HP's businesses, with nearly every high-tech company, and in nearly every form of alliance.¹ I have received various forms of recognition for successes. I love strategic alliance work. Fortunately, I also experienced failure and great challenge, which drove growth. For example, as a young alliance manager, before learning the principles to which I now ascribe, I led a long series of intense negotiations with IBM; I "drove" things in a competitive and meticulously detailed manner. Afterward, a colleague complained that I was overly-aggressive in the negotiations. Fortunately, life compels us to grow.

"Our strongest work is born of necessity."
- Herman Hesse (paraphrased)

Transformed by Necessity – During this same time I struggled with my drug addiction. The drugs used are irrelevant; the disease of addiction is very relevant. Life was painfully teaching me "figure this stuff out or die!" What I came to realize was that my analytical abilities and self-willed competitiveness could not help me with addiction; in fact, intellect and self-will can be spiritual disabilities. Addiction is a spiritual malady; the solution has to be spiritual. With over a decade free from drugs, I have learned:

- Addiction is anything we use to avoid facing the truth, mostly to avoid facing the truth of who we are.
- I cannot do this alone. I need a conscious contact with a Higher Power; I need to work with others; I need to be of service; I need to keep what I have by giving it away. Life is "a we thing."
- I need to openly and honestly confront (co-face, with my sponsor) my disease, my shortcomings, even my hypocrisies. With *acceptance* comes transcendence and freedom. I then need to lovingly embrace my addiction; with *embracement* comes transformation as curses become blessings. Both acceptance and embracement are done with others; this process cannot be done alone.
- I need to live spiritual principles: unity, staying in the moment, seeing the good in all, and being of service.

In the rooms of recovery we talk about the need to practice spiritual principles in all of our affairs. And so began my quest to figure out how to use (and be used by) practical spirituality in strategic alliances.

¹ Go to www.spibr.org/joe_kittel.pdf for a 1-page biography which complements this life story and www.spibr.org/Joe_Kittel_resume.pdf for a resume.



At the same time I was wrestling with drug addiction life gave me yet another spiritual teacher. This teacher came in the lives of my oldest son and youngest daughter. Both have a progressive neuromuscular disability, Friedrich's Ataxia (FA). FA is destroying their bodies and shortening their lives (Aaron died in November of 2010). FA, like drug addiction, can also be *transcended* and *transformed*, through the process of *acceptance* and *embracement*. Once again, I could only deal with FA with the help of others. So far, FA has taught me:

- A disease does not define who we are. We are not just our bodies.
- Be grateful. Be grateful for today. Be grateful for today's abilities and today's lessons.
- There is great power in our interconnectedness, our oneness. Life is "a we thing." I cannot do this alone.

Accepting Success – At the turn of the new century, a series of events began bringing success into my life. Through HP's merger with Compaq, I ended up developing strategic alliances for HP's printing business (IPG). I also grew through some painful failures, caused by ego, self-will and thinking too much.

When I began to see success coming my way, I was scared, I feared success. I can all-too-easily sabotage success. So I visited the psychotherapist who had saved my life from drug addiction; this time I needed him to help save me from myself. This was a major turning point. I still remember his advice from more than ten years ago: stay true to yourself, find a sacred place, meditate every day, and go to the source. Each day I try to stay true to the truth within me. My initial sacred place was a studio apartment high atop Heidelberg, Germany – looking out over the tiled rooftops of that historic town of philosophers and great thinkers. Today my sacred place is *here and now*. Since early 2004 I have consistently meditated. And in my spiritual studies I do go to the source; I seek out the commonly referred to references in spiritual writings.²

Take Your Ideas and Double Them – During this time of deep change I was working for a manager who enabled success; this man embodied sincere gratitude and exuded happiness.³ For contrast consider my first seventeen years at HP, during those years when I took an idea to my manager, he would in effect say, "Great idea, let's cut it in half and think about it for six months." When I took my ideas to my last manager at HP, he would in effect say, "Great idea, let's double it – today!" With his encouragement and sincere gratitude, I was empowered. As I see it he embodied the attributes of deity.

Doing the Impossible – With an empowering manager and growing spirituality, I guided an alliance team that literally accomplished the impossible. It took us a year and half of discussion and nine months of formal contract negotiations, but we eventually established an alliance with SAP in Germany that, for years, many had said could not be done.

When I had first headed off to Germany, I sort of expected to receive direct revelation which would tell me the spiritual principles to use in strategic alliances. Instead, life gave me experiences which called for the development and use of practical spiritual principles in our alliance; otherwise, our deal would not have happened. At the conclusion of this work, I heard labels applied to me such as "peacemaker" and "savior of the business." This was quite a change from my earliest work in alliancing, when I was excessively-aggressive.⁴

Boldness and Fundamentals – In July 2005 I made the bold move to voluntarily left HP. Motivated by love and the desire to serve, an opportunity presented itself to lead a group of community volunteers to remodel a home for wheelchair accessibility (for my son to live and die in). Since 2006 I have been focused on providing training, consulting and coaching services to strategic alliance managers; to helping them understand their unique role and their unique value in business. I am focused on the practical use of spiritual principles in strategic alliances.⁵

Who do I think I am? I think I am a child of God – more powerful and more loving than I can imagine; and, we need each other in order to realize this truth. I am a bold visionary who seeks and speaks the truth as best I can. Now I am using my deep thinking and strong self-will in a manner more aligned with spirit and love. I am persistent and tenacious. I am use to doing the impossible with nothing, so I am changing the world of business, starting where transformation is most strategically needed, in alliances and within alliance managers. I am a transformational change agent. How can I serve you?

² Go to www.spibr.org/good_books.pdf – these books have deeply impacted me. In 2003-2005, I lived half-time in Heidelberg, Germany. I took stacks of spiritual books. I read, wrote, reflected and meditated to understand the spiritual principles in strategic alliances.

³ The book *The Happiness Factor* by Kirk Wilkinson.

⁴ The label applied to me 16 years earlier was quite unsavory and somewhat profane; I was called an "a__hole negotiator."

⁵ The book *Spiritual Principles in Strategic Alliances: transform status quo mediocrity into greatness* by Joe Kittel.