



Timothy A. Braaten
Executive Director

TEXAS COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER STANDARDS AND EDUCATION

COMMENT ON OUR PROFESSION

Article Date: January, 03 2011

What gear are you in - neutral or drive?

A professional is someone who is good at what they do, they know why they are good, and they are always working to get better. The last phrase is the key: “they are always working to get better.”

Throughout the years, I’ve observed many individuals with great strength of character. I tried to emulate them. They were good, they seemed to know why they were good, and I could observe that they were always striving to improve their skills. There were others I have observed along the way who were good, knew why they were good, and in their own mind and in their own world, they were always going to be good without continuing effort. These latter individuals put forth effort in their earlier years, but unfortunately in their later years, they turned off their ambition and were in neutral and were coasting. The tragedy is that when you find a person coasting, they are often totally unaware why others are passing them by. They sometimes react with anger, some react with astonishment, and others don’t realize they are being passed as they are resting in a state of bliss.

In today’s world, the pace of learning has accelerated to such a speed that very few people can rest and coast without being quickly passed and left in the exhaust. If you’ve ever witnessed this occurrence, you have probably also witnessed an individual who attempts to catch up after a period of coasting. My observations are that the catching up is difficult and often impossible. I think it is both a function of the pace of change and the ability of the coaster to sufficiently accelerate.

I was looking forward to a time when I could coast. But as I witness how these coasters get left unceremoniously behind, I have learned that I had better put some giddy up in my step rather than slow my pace. I just don’t learn as quickly as I did when I was young, so I have to keep my speed up, because if I go into neutral, I won’t be catching up. I don’t know about you, but I know about me.

I’ve confessed my tendencies. Do you know yours? And more importantly, are you going to do something about it?