

Pass It On®...

A Little Direction Goes a Long Way.

If you've ever pulled into a gas station to fill up your new car and realized you parked on the wrong side, you have Jim Moylan to thank for giving you direction.

Life is complicated enough these days: how to access AI notes from the latest virtual meeting, how to program streaming services for sports only, and how to get that tiny hay fever pill out of a blister pack without scissors.

The last thing you want to think about is what side of your car the gas tank is on. It's a problem for travelers every time they rent a car, those who use a company fleet, and all of us when we idle into the station looking sassy in a new car, only to be embarrassed after pulling up to the wrong side of the pump. Lucky for us simpletons, there are people who make the decisions for us so we don't have to clutter our minds with wasteful problem-solving.

When Einstein was asked why he did not know his own phone number, he replied, "Why should I memorize something I can so easily get from a book?" Einstein believed the mind should be uncluttered and used for useful thinking and imagining. The trivial things in our lives should take care of themselves by way of simple cues – like an arrow to point us to the correct side of the car when filling up.

In 1986, Jim Moylan, an engineer at Ford, jumped in a company car to drive to a meeting across town. It was raining. He stopped to fill up, but the tank was on the opposite side, something he did not discover until he had been out in the rain searching for the cap. He turned the car around and thought, "Why is there not an indicator on the instrument panel that tells me which side of the car the gas tank is on?" When he got back from his meeting, he dashed off a memo to his superiors, making the suggestion in perfect engineer-speak: "I would like to propose a small addition to future I/P cluster graphics in all passenger and truck lines. The indicator or symbol I have in mind would be located near the fuel gauge and simply describe to the driver on which side of the vehicle the fuel fill door is located." The indicator was implemented and soon copied by all car manufacturers.

Our overly complicated lives need to be disrupted in ways that cause us to simplify. Every moment spent fuming over a few minutes wasted in the rain at a gas station could be spent conjuring sentiments for a child's birthday card or making a call to a spouse. When we rid ourselves of the clutter, we make room for the things that really matter.

Pulling into a gas station and seeing the dashboard indicator that tells us which side of the car the gas tank is on is more than a convenience. Maybe it is a reminder that we need to spend a few recaptured moments calling someone we love, smiling at a stranger, looking up to see the changing season rolling above us in clouds so breathtakingly beautiful that to miss the moment would be to miss the affirmation of being more than the moment. If who we are is the sum of our collected thoughts and actions, we should be making room for the ones that make a difference. Let a little arrow on the dashboard point us in the right direction.

Simplify to Appreciate...PassItOn.com

By The Foundation for a Better Life®

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