Vincent’s Story: One Client’s Pivotal Moment to Change

My story begins on March 18, 2013. I chose this date specifically because it was the day I got arrested. Now I can’t really share the specifics of my arrest but what I can share is out of my arrest came acceptance, humility and increased self-awareness. You see, as I sat in the back of that police cruiser a lot of my life had replayed in my head. In that same moment my life flashed before me and I envisioned the rest of my life being spent in incarceration. That scared me a great deal because I had already been to the penitentiary twice and had spent a majority of my twenties locked up. So that night I made a conscious effort to make change a priority in my life and first started by acknowledging God.

As I was awaiting the results of what would come of my arrest, I was sent to an overflow facility in Spokane called Geiger Corrections Center. While I was there I had found out that it was not looking too good for me because of the nature of my crime in addition to my history. I was looking at a minimum of 15 years, it was definitely an eye opener for me, but I was not going to let that discourage me from the commitment I had made to myself earlier. So I started to find different things to focus on and ways to better myself. It was then that I had found out about some classes they offered through a program known as Fulcrum. I had never heard of Fulcrum or knew anything about it. However, as I thought about how interesting the name of this program was I decided that I would get started on receiving help by educating myself and fully applying myself to these classes. Little did I know that this was going to be a life changing opportunity for me. Taking the classes through Fulcrum had helped me to identify what was wrong with the choices I was making in my life and help to discover more of who I was. The one course that really helped in my journey for self-discovery was the Discovering Emotions class.

CURRENT PROGRAM STATISTICS

Class Graduates:
266 Males
127 Females

Business Roundtable:
77% of Clients Employed

Mentoring:
54 Trained Mentors
Next Mentor Training is January 22nd

Vincent Cruz (pictured) visits the Fulcrum Office to meet with the Associate Director of Mentoring, Mandy Cripps

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D. Lish’s Hamburgers
Inspiring the Drivers of Spokane with Second Chances
By Mike Lish

Three months ago I created a new position for my company. I decided I was going to do something different, have a Sign Spinner. I originally posted the job opening on craigslist. I had a few applications, but most were very lackluster. I then talked to Fulcrum about it and they sent down a few applicants. Jerome was one of those applicants, all he came with was a smile, determination and no real experience in sign spinning. I hired him on the spot. He took the bull by the horns and learned all he could on the internet (about sign spinning).

Fast forward three months. I get nothing but compliments about “the guy on the corner.” He brightens everyone’s day, customers and employees. When he has a day off, customers come in and ask me where he is, tell me that he makes them smile every time they drive down Division and I should give him a raise. Jerome has fit in well with our work family. His smile is infectious and we are all rooting for him. I am so happy to have been able to give him this opportunity. The funny thing is, I know he is very happy about this job, but I am happier that I hired him. I now try to always give the Fulcrum institute a heads up when I am looking for new employees!

Vincent’s Story contd.

I had realized that there was a path for people such as myself that possessed the passion I had to help other individuals and that this could be accomplished with good sacrifices and positive results. At this point I had become more aware of myself and my surroundings as well. I still had a lot to discover and learn about myself. In the process I had realized that I couldn’t control what others intentions were or what they do. I could only learn from them and practice more self-control. Being able to realize this and with some time to practice, my acceptance had been heightened beyond even my beliefs, learning to humble myself became a major factor in my process to change.

Upon coming to this new facility I had regained contact with the Fulcrum Institute and still they have been nothing but inspirational, accepting, and supportive in helping me gain stability and my get life back. They have definitely been the Fulcrum in helping turn my life in the direction it has taken. First I just want to thank my heavenly father who has granted me strength and endurance in regaining control of my life once again. The wonderful Mentors at The Fulcrum Institute who helped make it possible to sort out all of the chaos in life to better prepare me for a more positive and productive lifestyle. Thank you all for this opportunity to live and be free once again.

“...they have definitely been the fulcrum in helping turn my life in the direction it has taken.”
WHAT IT MEANS TO MENTOR
BY MICHAEL DOGGETT

In the fall of 2012 I stumbled across a connection on Facebook that was like an online police scanner. Except, unlike a scanner I could shut it off at night and be updated the next morning on the previous night’s criminal activity. What a great way to stay informed on the criminal activity in our city. However, after several weeks of receiving these daily updates of the criminal activity I found myself fearful and considering moving out of the area.

In March of this year Fulcrum attended one of our motorcycle chapters and presented on the Re-Start program. It sounded very interesting but I wasn’t sure if I was qualified. I have volunteered for many things: Kiwanis, Big Brothers, Sunday school teacher, feeding the homeless, Volunteer Fireman…. My experience with being incarcerated was spending 8 hours in jail on New Year’s Eve of 1988 for a drunken fight. How would I be able to relate to these guys about their prison experience?

I belonged to a motorcycle chapter in Western Washington whose key focus was outlaw motorcycle clubs. We spent a lot of time studying them with the thought that we could relate with them better if we were more like them. We were being invited to a lot of their functions but it seemed as if they were influencing us more than we were influencing them. At a recent training session the presenter reminded us that the last thing for a person who is looking for help needs is someone who has the same habits, hang-ups and faults that they have. They are going to be looking for someone who thinks and reacts different from what they are used to. I have found this to be the case with the ex-offenders that I work with. Their thinking and actions are what put them behind bars and these actions were reinforced throughout the time they were in.

After learning about the Re-Start program, I decided that I could do one of two things, continue to live in fear with my eyes wide shut while crime flourished around me or I could get involved coaching and mentoring where my values and beliefs could have a positive influence on those who haven’t always made the right decisions. I shut down my Facebook account and stopped following the daily negative crime reports. Since March I have worked with 7 mentees. Each of them has been very different in the level of mentoring they have needed. A person who has spent 2 years in jail will require a different approach compared to someone who has spent 3 decades or more in prison. The one thing they all have in common is the need to have an advocate on their side. A lot of these guys have burned bridges with the family and friends in their lives. They need a friend who is a good listener and non-judgmental. They need a friend who will help them stay focused on the big picture, problem solve, and most importantly commit to maintaining regular contact.

“\There is nothing positive about the label ‘ex-offender’ and it can make you feel like there’s nobody there.\”

MENTOR TRAINING IS HELD ONCE A MONTH FOR PROSPECTIVE MENTORS. TO GET INVOLVED CONTACT THE FULCRUM OFFICE AT (509) 795-8955
Our first meeting is spent getting to know each other, exploring our likenesses. I also try to determine what challenges my mentee will be faced with: Does he have medical needs? What about transportation, employment and housing? We will usually schedule 1 meeting per week where most of the meeting is spent just listening about how their week has gone, challenges they have had, achievement they have made and goals for the next week. I offer practical support by helping mentees set goals, cope with stress and/or budget their money. I will review their resume, offer interview tips and give advice on how to dress for a job interview.

I do not believe in “Once a Criminal Always a Criminal”. There is nothing positive about the label ‘ex-offender’ and it can make you feel like there’s nobody there. I believe everyone deserves a 2nd chance. That’s why I’m doing what I am now, for those people to know there’s at least one person that is there for them, and that’s me. I became a mentor with the thought and idea that I wanted to contribute to my community and hopefully share some wisdom and life skills with ex-offenders. What I have found is that I have learned so much about myself through this opportunity. In most cases, I feel as if I am the one being blessed through the relationship with these guys. Of all of the volunteer work I have done, this is the one that I can truly see and feel the impact I have on a person’s life. Hearing the excitement in a mentee’s voice when he gets a promotion or finds an apartment, makes all the hours I have spent with them worth it.