



Leading in the Now

Drew Brees, quarterback of the New Orleans Saints, in the Monday night game against rival Atlanta Falcons, threw two interceptions in consecutive Saints offensive possessions, one of which resulted in a return for touchdown by the Falcons. With the score Atlanta 14, New Orleans 10 in the fourth quarter, Brees led a 90-yard drive that ended with a game winning touchdown pass from Brees to tight end Jimmy Graham.

Even the most casual of football fans knows that a quarterback who throws two interceptions in a game can be victimized by his own self-doubt. But it was worse than that. In this instance, Brees was responsible for two interceptions in the same (and final) quarter! Even the experts would agree that this could be emotionally devastating for a quarterback.

Not for a leader like Brees, who possesses what a lot of those who comment on professional sports would call "selective amnesia," the mental fortitude to let what happened in the past not deter someone from acting in the present—in the now.

We're living and acting in the present-the *now*. Or are we? Imagine three different but related *nows*:

1. The *now of the present*-the precise moments and seconds we live in. As I'm writing these words it is 12:31 pm, CST, December 28, 2010.
2. The *now of the future*-some precise or perhaps not so precise time that has not yet occurred but one that we can imagine. We can see it and imagine it now but it has not really happened yet. Any organization's vision statement worth its salt is a description of the now of the future.
3. The *now of the past*-some recollection of events, conversations, scenes, places, occurrences that happened before the *now of the present*.

We all know this, right? Right.

Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* invokes the three *nows* as a literary device, visiting the ghosts of Christmas past and future on a somewhat wearied Ebenezer Scrooge with great effect. What we may not pay attention to that may be of importance is how the *now of the future* and the *now of the past* influence our actions, what we say and do, in the *now of the present*.

In the movie *Spaceballs**, there is a terribly campy but humorously revealing scene where Lord Helmet (played by Rick Moranis) views a video tape replay of what has happened in the movie, with the video tape being sped up to a point where it reflects what is happening in the *now of the present* in the movie. Viewing the video tape as it mimics what is happening in current time simultaneously, the following dialogue between Helmet and Sanders occurs:

Helmet: When did this happen in the movie?

Sanders: Now. You're looking at now, sir. Everything that happens now is happening now.

Helmet: What happened to then?

Sanders: We passed then.

Helmet: When?

Sanders: Just now. We're at now, now.

Helmet: Go back to then.

Sanders: When?

Helmet: Now!

Sanders: Now?

Helmet: Now!

Sanders: We can't.

Helmet: Why?

Sanders: We missed it.

Helmet: When?

Sanders: Just now.

Helmet: When will then be now?

Sanders: Soon

Helmet: How soon?

We're always living in three *nows*, sometimes simultaneously. We'd be wiser to realize how we allow the *nows* of the past and future influence our actions (or failures to act) in the *now of the present*.

(* Editor's note: For a hilarious replay of this class scene, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AcY090XV284>)