

On March 13th, 2010 at 6:52 a.m. I summited Mt. Kilimanjaro. It is a cliché to compare a big life experience to climbing a mountain, but clichés are clichés for a reason.

It is true the creation of the hotel has been as physically and emotionally demanding as Kili was. It is true that even thorough preparation can only get you so far on either a mountain or a construction site. Those are pretty obvious comparisons, but there are a few others that are less obvious.

### **The Summit Isn't The Hardest Part**

When you are climbing a mountain, everyone thinks about the summit. When you are building a hotel, everyone thinks about the opening. Those photo ops are quickly forgotten when the reality of the next phase sets in. For me, the most difficult phase of Kili was the initial descent. Already exhausted from the summit push which began at midnight, I faced another ten hours of hiking to reach camp. It was steep. It was treacherous. I got more bumps and bruises in those ten hours then in all the ascent.

I have no illusions that the first few weeks in operation at the hotel will be any different. When the champagne flutes are all put away, we will be facing a steep trek that allows very little room for error.

### **Other People Can't Make You Succeed**

On the mountain, I was surrounded by a great team to support me and I was buoyed by all the friends and family at home who were rooting me on. No one, though, could get me to the top if I wasn't willing to fight for it. I realized that in a misty rock-strewn valley. I realized that in every agonizing step of the final summit push. When the weight of that sunk in, so did this overwhelming feeling of solitude.

Thousands of miles and a couple of years later, I flashed back to that cold, dark mountaintop. I was standing in a condo in downtown Toronto surrounded by tile samples and paint chips, but the feeling was exactly the same. There are dozens of people working on this project and dozens more rooting for its success. Its creation, though, was only going to happen if I fought for it.

And I did. And I do. Every moment of every day.

### **Bravery Is Overrated**

On occasion, someone will talk about how brave they think I am, and I will smile and bite my tongue. There are a few reasons I don't like that word. First, it tends to indicate an element of danger. Certainly, there is some level of risk to many of the things I do, but every tiny detail has been thought through before I begin the journey. I don't like to fail, so I never take on a

challenge I don't think I can succeed at. I also don't like the word because it infers that you have to have one unique character trait to live your dreams. It isn't about bravery.

Vision. Determination. Sacrifice.

Those are the three things that got me to the top of a mountain. Those are the three things that are getting a hotel built.