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Monthly Highlights and Leadership Lessons

December 2009



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Dear Friends,

I'll be sending these periodic newsletters hoping you will find their content interesting, thought-provoking and useful. If you like this newsletter, please forward it to colleagues and friends whom might enjoy it also.

I would like to wish all of you a wonderful holiday season. May you have the opportunity to reflect on all the good things in life: close loving family, good friends, freedom to prosper and excel in what you do every day, and the opportunities offered to make life better for people that need your help.

Over the years I have grown to love the song: ***Grown Up Christmas List***, performed by many fine singers and written by Linda Thompson Jenner. It's just a short list, but one that I could ask for every year:

***No more lives torn apart,
That wars would never start,
And time would heal all hearts.***

***Everyone would have a friend,
And right would always win,
And love would never end.***

Check out Defined Performance Solution's [website](#) and if I can be of service please give me a call at 706-726-6307.

Sincerely,

Doug Fine

Sharing A Peeve That Might Even Be A Pet

By Doug Fine



I would say that one of my peeves is encountering people that speak, act, and work in ways that manifest these characteristics:

Self-Importance
Arrogance
A Superiority Complex

I recall being at a gathering of about 120 mid-level and up managers who were asked to declare how they rated their performance when compared to their peers. We declared this with our eyes closed, of course, so no one would be able to see how each other viewed themselves. The result: 100% of those in the room believed themselves to be in the top 30% of performers when compared to their peers. 65% there believed themselves to be in the top 10%!

So much for a normal distribution, or the bell curve! Was I really in the company of such an extraordinary group of people that day, or was something else, perhaps leadership / [management](#) arrogance and self-deception, at play?

This was a very vivid demonstration of how wonderful managers and leaders often can perceive themselves to be compared to everyone else. But the truth is that leader performance is all over the map or normally distributed. A small percentage performs very very well. A small percentage performs very very poorly. Most fall somewhere in the middle. Of course management performance can be improved by effective [training](#), stretch development opportunities, being mentored and coached, self-reflection, and yes, even by [learning](#) from mistakes.

I learned yesterday that the amount of new technical information is doubling in the world every two years. It is estimated that 4 exabytes (4.0 times 10 to the 19th power) of *unique information* will be generated this year. Maybe

it is time to begin to pity or laugh at the arrogant know-it-alls that we sometimes encounter. Because obviously in relation to the information and knowledge potential that is out there, most of us know *very little*.

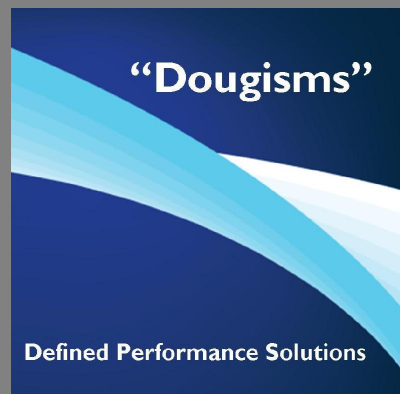
So that is my leadership lesson for this month. Maybe even an awakening pinch for us all. Hopefully we can take ourselves down a few notches, if only for today. I hope we can realize, as many of us were taught as young people, that everything we are and have is a gift, and pride and arrogance about our abilities and possessions are an unworthy response to that reality.

For who do you know that really knows you, knows your heart? And even if they did, is there anything they would discover in you that you could take credit for? Isn't everything you have and everything you are sheer gifts from God? So what's the point of all this comparing and competing?

1 Corinthians 4:7 (The Message)

The Monthly "Dougism"

Each newsletter I'd like to give you a little lesson from learning I have gained in my working life over 25 years in the military and business. I call them Dougisms, but most are not original. I've learned a lot from others and some of these come from the minds and mouths of good people that I have had the privilege of working with. Though I do put a little of my own thinking into them.



This month: "Equal opportunity means giving everyone the opportunity to become unequal."

I think, especially amongst white people, a certain amount of anxiety can arise when the terms "equal opportunity" and "diversity" are being considered. They can view them as loaded terms, perhaps even accusatory in nature. Does the term "equal opportunity" connote that I have been unfair in my practices and thinking in the past? Does the goal of having "diversity" in the workplace mean that I will have to work with unqualified people who are only there because my employer is keeping statistics on the race, color and gender of its workforce?

First off I want to be clear on where I stand on "equal opportunity." The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was entirely correct and necessary in its intent to make employment discrimination illegal on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, etc. Prior to this many employers would, without consequence, simply not hire someone because of these things. A person could be completely qualified for a position, be the best person for the job, but based upon the beliefs, prejudices, bigotry, or whims of a business owner or manager, they

would be summarily excluded from a chance to work. The Civil Rights Act as well as other employment laws in the U.S. attempted to right the wrongs of the discriminatory business practices of our past. Of course we haven't arrived yet, but we are much less willing to tolerate discrimination. I also realize, that as a member of the current majority I don't have any real experience as a victim of discrimination. But I hope that my viewpoint can still add value to the discussion.

Smart hiring managers should always choose the best people to work for them. If they are after the best they simply will not discriminate. They would be stupid to do so because it is evident that the best and most qualified people come from all races, all colors, all nationalities, both sexes, and all religions. A manager is paid for performance, if they hire people that are not the best, their own performance and that of their team will suffer. A manager should be offering an equal opportunity to all qualified candidates for the job. And may the "best" person get it.

Based upon what I've said, it is logical to conclude that a workplace should be very diverse, inhabited by all races, creeds, colors, nationalities etc. Also, every employee should be the best person in the job for which they were hired. At this point you might call this atmosphere a high-performance workplace or "*nirvana*" to an organization. (By the way, I've never seen it completely, but I have witnessed some teams and managers that have gotten close.)

Now, on to the nut of this Dougsim.

Is the playing field of the workplace equal yet? I would say "no" not yet, but it's improving. But at the same time, and in another sort of way I would also say, that an equal playing field in a work place is not the goal to strive for. Because even amongst this diverse "best" high-performing team, you will have stars that arise. You will have some staff that work harder, are more empathetic and service-oriented to the customer and their co-workers. They might make more sales. These "better of the best" are first to help out their teammates when the going gets tough, they are more aligned with the vision of the enterprise, and they keep themselves more current on the trends and changes of the business. They are a friendlier, more positive force on the work team. Their attitudes are more positive, more encouraging, than most. For these and for countless other reasons they have become best of the best and they have earned that distinction on their own. They are the boss's favorites and that is just great by me. Those who were chosen by a fair process of equal opportunity have become "unequal" from the rest by their own efforts and their superior performance. Last month I shared why I think it is not a problem that "coaches have favorites." For the same reason I believe that, however equal opportunity is understood

by others, to me it includes this meaning too: ***"equal opportunity means having an equal opportunity to become unequal."***

The Working Wounded: Those Still There After A Layoff

by Doug Fine

With this country's unemployment rate currently at 10%, no doubt companies are resorting to layoffs and firings as a strategy to weather the storm of this great recession that we are currently in. The late Russell Ackoff, a brilliant management professor at the Wharton School, viewed layoffs as evidence of management's inability to be imaginative and creative enough to find ways to redeploy and retrain their workforce to meet new business opportunities and develop new products and services for their markets. I tend to agree. But how many business or government leaders think that way in the heat of the moment when cutting a workforce appears to be the only response to a downturn in the economy? The day may come when leaders have better foresight to react to down markets in a way that provides evidence that they value the people that work for them and are willing to invest in the organization's future, not just wipe out people and maintain their status quo. But I won't hold my breath. Investments in people, in the human resources that an enterprise will never be able to do without, seems to be the last thing companies have on their minds when times get tough. So as a result, times often get tougher, because unemployment continues to rise and along with that, the purchasing power in the market.

Then there are those left behind, still with a job after a company lays off their co-workers. They suffer wounds that may not be as severe as those put on the street but these "survivors" need a tremendous amount of attention from management and leadership.

Managers should realize some things about the workforce left behind after a layoff:

1. They will be less productive.
2. They will be less loyal.
3. They will be wondering if there will be other rounds of layoffs

and whether they will be the next to go.

4. They will have feelings of guilt about still being there.
5. They will be more risk-adverse and less creative.
6. They may be looking elsewhere for a better place to work.
7. They will be less trusting of management and perhaps their co-workers
8. They may just hunker-down and operate in a "survivor" mode
9. Their service to customers will likely decline
10. They will resent the hell out of anyone that ever said: "It's like a family here."

There are no simple ways for a manager to address these post-layoff tendencies in the people who remain, but a leader must not pretend that they are not dealing with another very important issue besides how to get the job done with fewer people. A manager must have a strategy to help them best respond to this reality of the wounded survivor, and that response *must* include a whole lot of empathy.

A terrific book that covers this topic in great detail is [*Healing The Wounds: Overcoming the Trauma of Layoffs and Revitalizing Downsized Organizations*](#) by David M. Noer.

Next month I will provide you important information about the new "psychological contract" that employers and staff need to understand for the 21st century organization.



Provide first, second, and third aid to your working wounded.

Contact Doug

[Fill out an inquiry page.](#)

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