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Defined Performance Solutions

Monthly Highlights and Leadership Lessons

January 2010



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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 benefit from it too.

It has been very very cold in the Augusta Georgia / Aiken South Carolina area lately and I am ready for a change. It seems to be thawing out some so we can



get back to the semi-normal Southern weather we all enjoy.

As the weather has its seasons so too does your organization or business. Do you sense a change coming? Do you need things to thaw, get better, and go in a more focused direction, change? I specialize in helping organizations and work groups rise to their unique better potential and can provide at no charge a first-time consultation to you in the areas of:

Strategic Purpose - Are we going and growing where we need to?

Customer Focus - Do they love us or will they go elsewhere based upon price or service?

Training and Development - Do my staff and management need to be provided some time and attention to enhance their abilities to serve my needs?

Human Resources - Is it time to get professional support to build an HR infrastructure for policy, performance evaluations, effective discipline, pay issues, job descriptions, etc?

Teamwork - How are your staff working for the good of the enterprise, the good of themselves, and the good of their co-workers? Better teamwork involves all three.

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

The Spirit of Ubuntu

By Doug Fine



Have you ever had an encounter with another person that made you question your existence or your value as a person? I did. Years ago at a former employer I was in a situation, a staff member's office birthday party. You know how they are. You can't have too much fun because everybody's got work to do and you've got to get back to it. Call it office party efficiency. Often times these people are not even your friends but you are merely acquainted. This party happened to be in the executive suite, so factor that in too.

I happened to ask a simple, friendly, benign, small-talk question to a very senior leader that was also at the party. I'm sure he heard me. There is no way he did not.

He completely ignored me. He did not answer, did not acknowledge my question. He simply turned away from me, completely dismissive. Up to that point in my life I had never experienced such utter disrespect from anyone. Nor have I since. It affected me so; I guess that's why I bring it up here. That experience still stings. I've wondered if there is a place or a book where this young executive learned this? Was it some sort of "power technique" to ensure that I knew my place in relation to him?

This person did not acknowledge my mother's death to me after I had been away for a week or so to be with her and my family. He knew. There is no way he didn't.

I guess I can only hope that he's changed, for his own good. And for those around him now.

Make it a habit to acknowledge others. *See them.* Let them know that you know they are there.

I See You...

Among the tribes of Northern Natal in South Africa, the most common greeting, equivalent to

"hello" in English, is the expression: **Sawu bona**. It literally means, "I see you." If you are a member of the tribe, you might reply by saying **Sikhona**, "I am here." The order of exchange is important: until you see me, I do not exist. It's as if, when you see me, you bring me into existence.

This meaning, implicit in the language, is part of the spirit of **ubuntu**, a frame of mind prevalent among native people in Africa below the Sahara. The word **ubuntu** stems from the folk saying **Umuntu ngumuntu nagabantu**, which from Zulu, literally translates as: A person is a person because of other people." If you grow up with this perspective, your identity is based upon the fact that you are seen - that people around you acknowledge you as a person...

We should aspire to the mutual respect and openness that is embedded in the spirit of ubuntu. You could argue that we invoke each other's potential by our willingness to see the essence of each other. We see you. We are glad that you are here.

From ***The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook***, by Peter Senge, et al. (1994)

The Monthly "Dougism"

Each newsletter I'd like to give you a little lesson from the 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:

"Everyone is different and unique. Period. Amen."

I wish that I could remember the brilliant gentleman that I quote here and turned into a Dougism. I heard it with my own ears many years ago and it was on the last slide of his presentation about "diversity." I copied it down. I think that a discussion of diversity, however, should begin with this wonderfully crystallizing description of humankind. I wish we could all grasp and accept more easily that there is a huge variety and richness and variability in people and that discussing diversity only in terms of race, color, sex, nationality, religion, etc. really sells the term short.

I'd like to offer you a list of questions off the top of my head of things that can



quickly contribute to a wider understanding of what the term diversity encompasses:

- *What part of whatever country you grew up in are you from?*
- *Did you grow up with two parents or one (or none)?*
- *Are you a morning person or a night owl?*
- *Did you attend public school or private school?*
- *Have you ever had a life-threatening illness?*
- *Did you go to college, and if you did, did you have to pay your way?*
- *Do you know your personality "Type?" Myers and Briggs says there are 16!*
- *What are your politics?*
- *How soon did you start working?*
- *What year were you born?*
- *Are your parents alive?*
- *Did you grow up in a church? What church? A Temple? A Mosque?*
- *How many children did your parents have? Where did you fall in the birth order?*
- *Were your parents divorced? At what age were you? Did either remarry?*
- *Did you play team sports?*
- *Where have you worked before?*
- *Have you ever had a child of yours die?*
- *Were you adopted by your parents?*
- *Do you like to read?*
- *Have you ever been divorced?*
- *What kinds of music do you like?*
- *What are three of your favorite things to eat for dinner?*
- *Have you lived in other parts of the country? Have you lived in another country?*
- *Were you in the military service?*
- *Where have you traveled?*
- *Did you know your grandparents?*

I'm just trying to make the point that the people that you live and work with are different from you in so many ways, mostly based upon experiences and preferences. Sometimes I wonder how we ever get along at all. But mostly we do, because the vast majority of us have good will and appreciate differences instead of viewing differences as barriers to good relations. So please, try not to be narrow in your thinking when the topic of diversity is discussed but allow the reality of the many ways we are different (as well as the same) impress upon you and widen your viewpoint to see that we have so much to learn about and from each other. The flip side to widening your own viewpoint is to ask others to reevaluate their own understanding of diversity when they described it so narrowly in terms of only race, creed, nationality, sex, and color, etc.

"Everyone is different and unique. Period. Amen."

The "New Deal" of Work: *Understanding The Psychological* *Contract With Your Employer*

by Doug Fine

When you go to work, if you work for a company with more than, let's say 150 people, there is a fact that might be a hard pill to swallow - the company doesn't care about you. Trust me here. It doesn't. When I say "care," I'm talking about personally caring for you - about your well being, your wellness, your aspirations, your personal goals and dreams, those things about you that make you unique, your family, your troubles, your interests. It doesn't care. The evidence: When times get tough and cutting people seems to be the one strategy on the table, it becomes strictly a numbers game. The company will cut whomever it must to make it's numbers and weather the storm it is riding out. It just doesn't care. It could be you, it could be me. It doesn't matter that I cared for the company, that you cared, we thought it cared but it didn't really. It doesn't matter the years an employee spent contributing to the profit and competitiveness and sales and morale of the company. When it comes right down to it, in the end it didn't care about that. A very few co-workers may care about you, your boss may care but his or her "hands were tied." It even told us and everybody else it could, "We're like a family around here."

But really, that was untrue. It might have felt good to say, it might have felt good to hear and believe it, but when the chopping block is out and there is chopping to be done, let's see how much family feeling is around to be had in those times. Again, I ask you to trust me here.

Please don't misunderstand. I'm only trying to stun my readers into understanding one half of the new psychological contract that may be unwritten, but surely exists today in most, I'd say 98%, of companies today. One side of the new psychological contract that exists today is, on the part of company, that it really doesn't care about its employees. Truth is, a company can't care, it's a company for goodness sake, not a person. And as a company gets larger, its capacity to care lessens all the more.

So if you can accept that a company doesn't really care, really can't care, and

would downsize staff, no, let me put this closer to home, would lay **you** off in a heartbeat if it felt it had to, will you accept that you need to make a different psychological contract with your current employer and any employer in your future?

I would suggest a few things that you might want to include in your psychological contract, with your employer. Keep it in your head, but keep it as real as a contract on paper:

- ***I will work hard for this employer***
- ***I will gain transferable skills while working here***

- ***I will enhance my resume by meaningful contributions and projects that will benefit my company and me***

- ***I will make meaningful (internal and external) networking a part of my job here***
- ***I will acknowledge that lifetime employment at one organization is from a bygone era***
- ***I will be ready to move to another organization when the time comes***
- ***I am convinced that it will come for almost everyone***
- ***I will make it a priority to take advantage of training and development opportunities that my company provides***
- ***I will accept that in this new world of work I will have 6-10 "careers"***
- ***I will be 10 times more loyal to my career than I will be to any company I work for***

Some readers might wrongly view this idea of having a new psychological contract between employers and employees as somewhat radical, even in a way seditious. But nothing that I have shared here is new information. What has been needed though is a surfacing of this reality that a new psychological contract surely exists now but is rarely acknowledged. I think individuals and companies can work with each other in a more professional and realistic way by discussing these issues and clarifying mutual and personal expectations with each other.

Employers, companies and organizations out there - please don't shoot the messenger! It's important to understand that your professional level employees

(perhaps *all* your employees) are probably well aware of the new realities and to act or assume that they are not is an ineffective response. Like other contracts that need to be monitored and managed by businesses, you should add to the list the psychological contract with your employees.

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.



Contact Doug

[Fill out an inquiry page.](#)

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