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"Happiness? Simple really. You don't let short-term concerns ruin your life, and you don't let long-term concerns ruin your day."

»Robert Brault



Don't Trip Over Trivia

One of the more mercurial leaders I worked for was not the kind of person you brought trivial grievances to.

Well, maybe you did...but it was something you usually regretted as soon as the words left your mouth.

To be fair, he seemed to have a good feel for how candid he could be with different folks.

In a weird way, some of us took the fact that he was blunt with us as a sign that he knew we could take it.

(Or maybe we weren't very bright. That's a possibility.)

Once, on my way out after a large meeting, he tapped my shoulder and asked me to stay for a couple of minutes.

My heart skipped a beat as I immediately began wondering what I had goofed up that month and who had turned me in.

I was relieved when he said, "You aren't here in [the] main office much. I just wanted to see how you're doing out there and if you need anything from me."

I don't remember the trivial issue that popped into my head. It was likely one of the regular



Striking the Right Chords

Every now and then I find myself giving advice around our home that sounds like things I've told to outside groups for years.

The main difference is that the outside groups are usually more interested in what I have to say.

I recently needed a short piece of music for a project I'm producing.

My college sophomore son is a gifted musician living at home between semesters.

His bedroom is practically a studio with more musical instruments, mixing boards, cameras, microphones, and computers than a high school theater department.

I offered to pay him to produce a short clip of music for my project. I didn't ask for anything out of his wheelhouse.

He's recorded and produced lots of tracks like I was looking for.

He seemed excited about the project and told me he could get me something in a couple of days.

A couple of days passed, and I asked how it was going. He said he was almost there.

things branch managers griped about behind the scenes.

I do remember his response, however.

He told me, "I would have thought something that small wouldn't bother you. Is that all you got? Have I been overestimating you?"

I mumbled, "Uh...I hope not."

Blunt? Yes. Accurate? Yes. Fun in the moment? Not at all.

But in a weird way, it was motivating. While critiquing my trivial complaint, he said he expected better from me.

You only expect better from people you believe can be better.

I recovered well enough to talk about an upcoming sales call with a company I was shocked was giving me the time of day.

Not only did he congratulate me for getting a foot in their door; he also committed to personally accompanying me.

I walked away from an initially unpleasant interaction more motivated than I'd been in ages.

I also took away a lesson that is still with me today. Don't complain about things that you can either resolve yourself or are too trivial to matter.

You can tell a lot about a person's competence and confidence by what they allow to deter them.

No one denies there are plenty of reasons to complain these days.

Everyone has a list.

Strive to keep things in perspective and be honest with yourself about how many of the complaints on your list are unworthy of the leader, peer, and person you strive to be.

Two more days passed, and I hadn't gotten anything. I asked again and he said that he was close.

I found myself morphing from an inquisitive dad into an increasingly impatient customer.

When a week had passed and I hadn't received anything, I sat down with him to assess the situation.

As it turns out, he had the musician's form of writer's block.

Knowing it was something I would use for professional purposes, he felt pressure to produce something impressive.

He put stress on himself that kept him stuck in the starter's block.

Understanding that, I told him, "Go record 30 seconds of garbage for me. Produce something you know is not nearly your best."

When he asked why, I repeated a line I've used for years. I said, "You are more likely to act your way into feeling than feel your way into acting."

He didn't think I was serious until I threatened to go into his room and record something myself.

Instead, he began putting things together with no intention of using them.

Within three hours, he sent me a track that was almost perfect. A few tweaks later, it was.

We all get mentally stuck now and then.

You get unstuck by jumping into things.

Pick up the phone. Send an email. Stop in on a customer.

Success is born of action.

Rock on.

"Opinion is really the lowest form of human knowledge. It requires no accountability, no understanding. The highest form of knowledge is empathy, for it requires us to suspend our egos and live in another's world."

» Bill Bullard

Dave Martin, author of The In-Store Advantage, has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.

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