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"When you make a basket, point to the player who threw you the pass. That applies to not just basketball, but everything we do. No one makes it through life without lots of assists."

»Dean Smith



On a Role

I recently watched a video that brought a quote by Golda Meir to mind.

A friend sent me a clip of a CEO addressing members of his company with a level of "folksiness" that seemed, well...insincere.

The quote that came to mind from the former Prime Minister was "Don't be so humble – you are not that great."

Honestly, that line confused me the first time I read it back in college.

I realized it was a quip, but it seemed backwards. Isn't humbleness a good thing?

It wasn't until later that her words made sense to me. In her own cutting manner, she was taking a shot at people who faked humbleness to promote themselves.

She may have been the first person to call out the "humblebrag."

In this instance, it appeared that the CEO was playing a role (poorly) that he was unsuited for.



Great Expectations

Goals and expectations are a natural part of life. If we improve our diets and increase our exercise routines, we expect to improve our physical fitness.

If we practice a musical instrument, we expect to become appreciably better at playing it.

Those are simple examples. They are also almost entirely under our control.

Maybe our constitutions are more suited to some physical activities than others, but we can adjust.

Our brains may be inclined toward mastering certain musical instruments more than others, but we control the primary activities necessary to reaching our expectations.

Things become more complicated when other humans are involved with the achieving of our goals and expectations.

Free will is one of life's great gifts. It also tends to complicate things when we rely on predicting other humans' choices and behaviors to reach our goals.

The folksiness and seemingly forced “plain talk” came off more as condescending than ingratiating.

I suspect that he (or whomever consulted with him) thought the approach would connect with team members in the field.

They likely misjudged folks’ sophistication. The message did not ring true.

At a minimum, the slightly patronizing tone made his message seem a bit less believable.

Hey, I’m a longtime advocate of the importance of thespian skills when leading people during challenging times.

That said, we need to play the right characters...and play them well.

Many moons ago, I worked for a great guy who made the point that few things ingratiate you to customers and employees as much as the simple showing of respect.

Furthermore, he felt that the best compliment you can give people is to respect their intelligence.

In one meeting with managers, he commented that people tend to behave the way you treat them.

If you treat and speak to your teams like smart, competent people...they tend to behave like smart, competent people.

If you treat them like children, well...you’ll tend to get the opposite.

Something as simple as the tone in which we speak to team members and customers can have almost as much impact as the words we say.

During times of uncertainty more than ever, people are looking for authentic leaders – at all levels – who show genuine interest in helping them succeed.

Strive to play that role for your own team.

But to be fair, it’s likely your own free will has occasionally thrown monkey wrenches into other folks’ expectations, as well. Just saying.

I chatted about these things late last year with a banker who was upset with how an employment decision turned out.

His commitment to the company he had been with for over a decade was waning.

He seemed more saddened than angry about the situation.

He felt that people he thought were “on his side” apparently weren’t.

I suggested that it’s hard to know that. Clearly, they didn’t make the decision he wanted them to make.

However, he had no guarantees, nor had anyone strongly intimated an outcome.

I knew him well enough to suggest that this thing didn’t happen because it wasn’t supposed to happen.

And we can now know for a fact it wasn’t supposed to happen... because it didn’t happen.

That’s not simply quasi-motivational mumbo jumbo.

I asked if he could recall some of the things he once hoped for, didn’t get, and was later happy that he didn’t.

He laughed and said that he did and hoped that would be the case again.

It was. Within a few months he got a more exciting opportunity that didn’t exist at the time the other big break had not broken his way.

Sometimes things actually do go our way, but it doesn’t feel like it in the moment.

The vital thing is remaining engaged and committed to be deserving of the better opportunities just around the corner.

"No man steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man."

» **Heraclitus**

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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