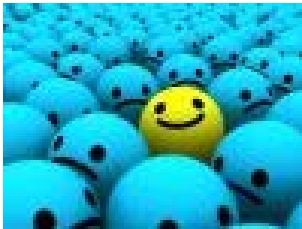


Sunday, December 15, 2019

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"Don't worry about criticism from people you wouldn't seek advice from." » [Dabo Swinney](#)



Be of Good Cheer

I've been flying a bit more during the last two months of the year than usual.

Most years, the bulk of my travel has been done before the airports become an especially concourse-choking mass of humanity during the holiday season. Not this year.

So, I've been doing more people watching than usual.

Crowded airports and retail stores have provided abundant opportunities to observe folks in the same workplaces, yet experiencing different work environments than their peers.

This was the case when my wife and I made a trip to a large retailer on Thanksgiving afternoon.

I needed to pick up a few hardware items and didn't realize I was walking into a Black Friday cyclone.

Silly me...I forgot that some Fridays apparently start on Thursdays.



...A Few Miles Down the Road

As I was coming up on the last half mile of a long, more-lumbering-than-usual run a couple of weeks back, my Spotify app randomly played John Parr's "St. Elmo's Fire". I smiled and turned it up.

There was a time "back in the day" that St. Elmo's Fire was my absolute favorite song.

Somewhere along the way...and after I likely heard it 1,000 times...I suppose I began tuning it out.

In recent years, when it came on the radio or whatever I was listening to, I generally changed the station or pressed "skip". (Nothing personal, John Parr.)

I've just heard the song...a lot. A whole lot. But at that moment, it resonated anew.

An hour earlier in my car, I would have changed the station. An hour after my run, ditto. Right then, however, it struck a nerve.

Sure, Eye of the Tiger, or Tom Sawyer, or Livin' on a Prayer may have worked as well. (Don't judge me.)

There were hundreds of people walking around the store with determined faces, waiting for 6 PM.

Someone regularly came over the PA to ask customers not to attempt to bring advertised items to the cashiers before the start of their promotion.

I felt the need to grab our stuff and get out of there.

I half expected that the voice of Tina Turner would soon be coming over the PA system declaring, "Welcome to another edition of...Thunderdome!"

That shopping experience was not a pleasant one...until we reached the check-out lanes.

The young cashier had a smile on her face and a cheerful tone that didn't quite match the chaos and stress around us. That was a nice surprise.

In the two minutes or so we interacted with her, we laughed several times and learned about each other's holiday plans.

We went from grumbling about being in the wrong place at the wrong time to raving about how friendly that young cashier was.

We walked out with something that seemed hard to find in that crowded store: smiles.

It got me reflecting on the common phenomenon I see time and time again in all types of work environments.

People performing their jobs in the same workplace can have entirely different work environments.

Upbeat and courteous people usually get to work around happier and more courteous customers and coworkers...because they help to create them through their own behaviors.

Will your own customers and coworkers become more or less cheerful from being in your presence this week?

That St. Elmo experience reminded me of a phenomenon I've experienced many times over the past decade or so.

I've had the wonderful opportunity of working regularly with some of the same institutions during that period.

One of my recurring jokes is that I sometimes feel like Jimmy Buffett or The Grateful Dead when speaking at some events.

I regularly have folks who walk up and tell me how many times they've heard me over the years.

That can be both flattering and intimidating.

There is pressure to deliver messages that are in synch with the ones that got you invited back in the first place.

There is equal pressure to avoid becoming stale and predictable.

Yet, on more occasions than I can remember I've had folks, whom I know have heard certain observations multiple times before, tell me how those topics really resonated with them that day.

I often joke that it was because they weren't paying attention any of the previous times I said those things.

The truth, however, is that even a very familiar message can resonate anew depending on a person's life experiences, present situation, or any number of other factors.

That's relevant for all of us. I like to remind leaders that their own "greatest hits" in offering support, advice, and motivation to their teams are "hits" for a reason.

Sincere, helpful messages stand the test of time. Share some of your favorites today.

"Pessimism leads to weakness, optimism to power."

» William James



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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