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Who Do You Need?

PART 4: COURTEOUS

Written by: Craig Vosper, Chief Delivery Officer

Last week I mentioned that in order to communicate properly we need to “inspire others to come away feeling good about a conversation”. While there are many different elements to good communication, I felt a bit more focus on this aspect would be worthwhile.

I’m not sure that “courteous” is the best way to describe this, but I feel like it could be summed up as: “do not be a jerk”. Even in the most intense corporate environments there is never the need to be a jerk when working with others. Regardless of how clear your message was, how courageous you were in bringing up a topic, or how curious you were to hunt down a particular opportunity, if people come away thinking you are a jerk, it all goes to waste.

I made the mistake, a few years back, of thinking that I had to be a jerk during tough times to get the most out of my team. I’d be the first to jump on our employees when something went amiss on a project. As you could predict, this did not end up being very helpful. All I managed to do

was make everyone feel bad and be less open to bringing up issues in the future.

Sadly, this was a lesson I had already learned. During my time in the Army, I had the opportunity to serve under multiple leaders. I quickly learned that you do not need to be a jerk to be direct and straightforward with critiques or suggestions. The approach didn’t seem to matter, whether they yelled or whispered, those who came off as a jerk, I ignored, those who did not, I listened to.

One of the greatest leaders I’ve ever had nearly brought me tears when he simply told me, in a quiet and even tone, “I’m disappointed in how you handled that”. While it felt like a mule kick right to the gut, it motivated me more than any other comment I’ve received in my life. It was so powerful because I knew that he wanted nothing more than for me to get better, to learn how to become a better Officer and leader.

You need people whose goal is to help others become better people. These people will inspire those around them, and you will see that others will respond to ideas, criticisms, and suggestions more positively.

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