



## **A Management Minute – Occasional Introspection is a Good Thing**

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It's important to keep in mind that sometimes poor behavior turns out to be bad execution of good intentions; the problem is that people typically judge us based upon our observable behavior, as they are not privy to our original good intentions. Thus, we need to do all we can to ensure that our observable behavior accurately reflects our true motives and agendas.

Most leaders have experienced occasions when someone in your audience has totally misread your "message." If your ego is a dominant factor in your dealings with personnel, you will have a tendency to blame the misunderstanding on the person who received your message instead of looking at yourself as part of the problem.

My wife, Leslie, pointed that fact out to me after an event where I had called attention to a firefighter by name and stated that his idea had made a positive change in the organization. The firefighter spoke to me after the event and told me that he was not happy about having been singled out. I didn't understand why he wasn't happy as I thought I had given him positive recognition.

Leslie pointed out to me it was not the message I delivered or my recognition of the firefighter; rather, it was the tone in which I delivered the message. After some reflection, I realized that I had let some of my frustration come out in my attitude and tone of voice while discussing the situation before the group. My intent had been good but my execution was less than stellar.

Judging others can be a dangerous activity and you must remember that it's a two-way street. Just as you're judging those people you work with who can "suck the life right out of you," it's good to remember that they may be looking at you the same way if your behavior occasionally is not up to par.

Look beyond the occasional bad behavior and affirm your belief in their good intentions. If they have positive feedback from you, it should encourage them to work harder and smarter and strive to accomplish their good intentions. Good intentions are a matter of the heart which can't be faked for long.

Remember, however, that you will always encounter some people who genuinely have poor intent. They may not be aware of it or even admit it, but deep inside they seek only their own self-satisfaction, sometimes at the expense of the organization. Learn to distinguish those bad apples from the ones who have good intent and want to do what's right but whose execution is poor. Your department will be a better place if you take the time to listen to your heart – and theirs.

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