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Candid

By Paperitalo Staff

I learned it from my mother, no doubt: speak plainly and state your opinion. My mother said what she thought and repeated it often.

When I first joined industry many decades ago, one of my politically correct managers told me, “My, you are so candid!” I thought it was a compliment, little did I realize it was not.

There is a difference in being candid versus being obnoxious or abusive. The obnoxious and abusive are at least temporarily showing their insecurity: they have chosen fight over flight when confronted with a real or perceived enemy.

Candidness is different—being candid is telling the unvarnished truth, at least in your opinion. For many, it is not a safe path, for if you are candid and someone powerful disagrees with you, you may be out the door.

We like candid, as long as it is being exercised by someone else. Otherwise, why would even a small minority of the US population be attracted to Sarah Palin or Donald Trump?—they are candid, plain spoken characters.

In business, we need more people who will be candid. Those of us in the consulting profession are known for not being candid (“on the one hand, on the other hand...”) so perhaps that is why I do fairly well at it—I speak my mind. In fact, I see more people in mills hedging their bets and speaking carefully than do I.

And this is a disservice to the owners, be they private or public shareholders. Mills need us to all come with all we know and tell it like it is. Anything else is fiduciary malpractice, for one who

practices it is putting their own career or engagement (in the case of consultants) above what is their best professional opinion for the owners.

Does this mean you will sometimes say something people don't like? Absolutely. Will it get you dismissed? It is possible. Yet these go with the territory if you really are a professional.

As I have visited mills over the years, I think lack of candidness would have to be at the top of the list of the reasons mills do poorly or fail. I have certainly seen mills with plenty of talent and assets do poorly, and the only reason discernible is the staff is not honest with themselves and each other—that is candidness. Stated another way, if you can't dismiss your delusions or illusions, you are bound to fail, for you are operating in a world of wistfulness, not the world of reality. Eventually this will harm you and your mill's owner.

It is death to not deal realistically and candidly with your problems. And this starts with yourself—you can't fix your mill until you are honest with yourself.

We are usually candid when it comes to safety—for it is something that matters in the here and now. Consider taking this learning from your safety training and applying it to the rest of your life.

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##