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Yes

By Paperitalo Staff

An anecdote related the other day reminded me of one of the uglier aspects of working in modern industry. The reminder came to me in the form of a statement of one person about another something like this: “So and so is such a ‘yes’ person.”

Over the years I have run into a number of these sad creatures. The worst case I have ever seen reminded me of an abused dog. This person even cowered like an abused dog, and, if they had had a tail, I am sure it would have been tucked firmly between their legs all the time. By the way, I love dogs, and anyone who abuses one need steer clear.

My reaction upon seeing a human being in this condition is one of mixed emotions. On one hand, I want to euthanize the jackass that did this to them; on the other, I want to tell the victim, as the Godfather did in the original movie (talking to singer Johnny Fontane), to “Act like a man!” (or woman as the case may be). Yet, even the Godfather, while frustrated, managed to have the head of the perpetrator’s prize horse share the perpetrator’s bed, so he apparently had mixed emotions, too.

If some jackass has turned you into a ‘yes’ person, you need to take control of the situation and fix it. You may need professional help to do this—nothing to be ashamed of—your humble writer has been in counseling for years. The key is for you to wake up, take control of the situation and get back in control of your life. You can do this and you should do this for the sake of yourself, your family, and yes, even so you can fulfill your fiduciary duty as an employee. (In the latter case, if you are always a ‘yes’ person, you cannot always be doing what needs to be done for the good of the business that employs you—you a merely taking the path of least resistance).

Now, if you are the bully that creates ‘yes’ people, shame on you. You are definitely not fulfilling your fiduciary duty as you force your way on everyone. I am not saying you should resort to ‘paralysis by analysis” (you won’t anyway), but I am saying real leadership is not always demonstrated by being the loudest mouth in the room (or the cruelest trickster in the building). I have worked for your type, too, and used to be afraid of you until I learned that it is most likely

your insecurity that causes you to behave this way. You need counseling, too, but it is far less likely that you will get it than will the miserable 'yes' person.

Now, I trust this little column will not push the industry into even a slower decision making process. That is not my intent. We are slow enough at changing as it is. What I hope to do is bring to the forefront the concept that real leadership involves real competency on the part of everyone. From the overall condition of our industry one can see real leadership is something of which we need more, much more. Bullying? Take that somewhere else. Safety involves leadership, too—leadership by example. If you are a manager, safety is your first responsibility and everything else comes after that. If you are a bully, the fear you instill in others may just be the source of mental preoccupation that causes them to have an accident. Be safe and we will talk next week. ##