

Action, not words

By Paperitalo Staff

There is an old Mercedes advertisement which I had framed years ago and have hanging in my office. It is a print ad and says simply, “Deeds, not words.” It is over twenty years old.

So many problems in business can be solved by adopting this as your motto. So many problems in your career can be solved by adopting this as your motto.

Words inspire and are a call to action. However, at some point action must be taken. I use this with my own team when talking about “spinning the invoice printer.” Words can only take us so far. But to get the words that count, those written on a check that can be deposited in the company bank account, takes action.

Large companies are filled with inefficiencies that allow some to get by with words and no action. Such people are professional (internal) politicians. You have seen them and so have I. They talk a big talk, but the deeds that can be assigned to them are small indeed.

It is a combination of words and deeds that works most effectively (unless you are on the bottom rung of the ladder, then you only have deeds and talking to yourself).

And it is the talking to yourself that gets you and your organization in trouble. I often witness employees telling themselves, supervisors, human resources and anyone else they can get to listen how unfairly they are treated. I have heard it all. I can guarantee one thing for such employees—their lot in life is not going to improve (by their own standards). Why? They are all whine, no action. They have effectively killed their own future.

I heard a talk one time which I have mentioned here before. The speaker said this, “You are hired for your résumé and fired for your personality.” No truer words were ever spoken. Now, if you are fired, you’ll never hear anyone say it was because of your personality, but believe me, it is. I have sat in many a staff reduction meeting back in the old days when I was employed by corporations. If a downsizing was happening, every time, I can promise you, the people who were cut were the ones no one could get along with.

Some think Presidents and CEOs are all words, no action. This is not true. Granted, they must use the bully pulpit to inspire the troops, but they must take action, too. A good example is one who

is about to retire—Mr. Jim Rubright of RockTenn. When Mr. Rubright took the helm at RockTenn 14 years ago, his company was a non-descript niche player near the bottom of the prestige list in the pulp and paper industry. Today, it is a behemoth in packaging in North America, having absorbed Gulf States, Southern Container and Smurfit-Stone. These acquisitions were accomplished with far more effectiveness than those of another company originating in the 1970s who tried the same thing and is now but a memory. RockTenn's stock has earned a compound annual rate of return of 18.6% for the fourteen years of Mr. Rubright's tenure.

So, no matter your position, remember action is what counts. Whining does not count.

For safety this week, we do know you do not stand around and look at accidents. If you are on your mill's EMS team, make sure you know your role no matter the emergency.

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##