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## ***Do what I say!***

By Paperitalo Staff

If you have read this column for some time, you have figured out I am very creative. I don't know why and can't explain it--it is a gift.

There are times to be creative, times to follow orders. In the last few months, it seems like I have heard a number of people say something to the effect, "If only I had done what my boss told me to do." I have also heard, "If so and so had done things the way I told them to way back when, they would be much further along in their career right now."

If only I could give you for certain advice which would enable you to avoid making either of these statements in the future!

Part of the problem is, until you really know a leader's competency, you don't know if following them blindly will be good for the company or for you. However, we can put some odds on this that will help you out. Unless they are the boss's offspring (and the boss's offspring should not be completely discounted), they most likely know more about what needs to be done than you do. At least someone thought they did, or they would not have put them in their current role. So, our first lesson is the odds are against you going against your boss's wishes.

The second issue that favors the boss is that being rebellious can get you fired--fast. I once worked in a facility that was experiencing a great deal of upheaval. All the top leadership, including me, was new to the facility. A new senior vice president came in from another company. Our new mill manager (not me) reported to this gentleman, as did I and several others. The new mill manager had decided mill managers should not come in or even be called on weekends. Even though he had been with the company a long time and the new SVP only a few weeks, that mill manager did not celebrate two months in the role. He was gone. The boss is the boss.

So, what do you do if you have great ideas that are counter to the current philosophy? You have to study, plan and carefully make your case. But you do this only after you have already neatly done every routine task your boss asks of you. When you are specifically doing all that is ask of you, you earn the right to suggest new and better ways--not before. Anything you try before you complete what is asked of you is perceived as insubordination. It gets you nowhere.

I have mentioned before how I admire the management system used by the military. I have also mentioned why I admire it--it is the only management system I know that can persuade people to give up their lives for the cause. That is a talent. So look where they stand on insubordination. It is not tolerated, in even the least, tiniest, minor infraction.

I am not saying you should not be creative. Creativity is what moves our businesses forward. However, it has to be applied judiciously.

For safety, we want our first responders to apply all of their knowledge, but do it with the precision of the military. Seldom in a first responder situation is creativity called for, except perhaps in the case of extricating people from a burning building.

Be safe and we'll talk next week. ##