

You Don't Understand, and That's Okay

The biggest hang up where leaders get stuck is when a leader tries too hard to make someone understand a difficult decision. When you get push back from a star employee, a key sponsor, or even someone you really like, it's easy to get distracted and take a left hand turn to the island called, "Making Sure He Understands." Underneath this dysfunction is the need to be liked...the pattern of taking on other people's emotional needs so their agenda and short term gains can be met. There is an unconscious desire to avoid difficult conversations and feelings.

An attribute of leadership is the ability to separate what belongs to you and what does not. You must see a bigger picture. You must learn how to make difficult decisions. You must separate fact from feelings. These skills take focus and disciplined practice. Taking on other people's emotional issues is the path to dysfunction.

Often leaders avoid difficult conversations because they would rather avoid the pouting and manipulation that is sure to surface. A red flag to me that the leader is avoiding is when I hear something like, "Well, we're all adults," or "It won't matter a hundred years from now," or "I'll give them the benefit of the doubt. STOP right there! If someone's pouting, persuasion and politics has influenced you in small areas, what happens when you have no other choice but to take a stand? What is the potential risk when you can no longer stick your head in the sand, go into denial or use avoidance for short term relief?

Avoidance is a Short Term Tactic

The conversation you avoid today is the lawsuit you are handling ten years later. Nipping it in the bud won't work either. The bloom always comes back in due season.

As a leader, you have to focus on the overall good--the bigger picture-- and sometimes that means difficult decisions where you literally have to rip drama by the roots.

Ripping drama by the roots is not glamorous. You will get your hands dirty. You also won't have a great story to tell. Preventative tactics are never as exciting because you don't know the outcome of the choices you didn't let play out.

If you have the courage to make difficult conversations you will never know for sure if that conversation saved your company a million dollar law suit. You'll never be a case-study for universities to teach to consultants. You'll probably not get any credit, and you'll make a few enemies, but you will grow.

You will grow with confidence. You will grow respect from others, and you will be able to sleep at night because you made an enlightened choice instead of one based on the need for someone else to agree.