



Gifts

Thoughts on leadership
by Karl Pister



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A bit of backstory.

I like to think well of myself. Most people do. And, the research would show that most of us think a bit more highly of ourselves than the world around us. I can send you the citation if you wish.

Why are we talking about this? Because I received a gift that I want to share, and it came in a rather unconventional way.

I was recently asked to discuss a possible coaching engagement. The initial calls went well. The major call went well also, or so I thought.

This is where the gift comes in.

As I normally do, I followed up on the call to let the parties know that I would be in their area as part of an existing travel schedule. My contact let me know that they had decided to go with another vendor.

Not what I wanted to hear, but... can't win 'em all.



But 'can't win 'em all' are not words of elite performance, so I did ask him for any input that would help me know what I could do better.

I always do that. And I always receive responses such as...

...it was a tough decision....

...you were one of the final choices...

...etc.....

Whether right or wrong, those are safe responses and life moves on.

In this case, my contact promptly got back with me in writing, and then offered to discuss with me more in-depth if that would help. I took the opportunity and now I share the gift, paraphrased:

...the panel felt you were distracted...

...you didn't seem to be engaged...

...it wasn't your A game...

...it seemed that you had backed off on wanting the opportunity...

Now you might think that is a strange definition of a gift.

But think about it.



If the research is correct, and it is, the odds of me seeing what had been perceived by the panel in the interview are slim, at best. In fact, I remember telling my wife that I felt it had gone well. I was clueless to their perceptions!

If he had not had the class to answer honestly, I would have proceeded without perspective. I love the phrase, "practice makes perfect". However, the phrase is wrong. It should be "practice makes permanent".

Without that feedback, would I have asked the following questions:

1. Has the remote environment made me less precise?
2. Are there details that I am overlooking that could have contributed to their perceptions?
 1. Instead of passing over that question lightly, did I go back to the day of the interview, review my calendar, check my memory, etc?
3. Since I can't get that day back, are there actions I can do to analyze distraction moving forward?
 1. Am I ever multitasking when I should be focusing?
 2. Do I bring myself into every meeting knowing the details well?
 3. Am I as present remotely as I am in person?



4. Using their phrase, do I intentionally bring my "A game", every time, without fail?

Without asking those questions, and taking actions on the answers, I cannot improve.

To that point, a friend of mine modified a great quote by Steven Covey:

If you keep on doing what you have always done, you will keep on getting what you have always got. Which probably isn't what you want, but is exactly what you deserve.

The take-away from your end?

Is there a question you can ask that would reveal a blind spot?

To whom would you ask that question?

Now, when will you do that?

My thanks to this person for this gift. It made me think and it made me more aware. And hopefully, it will serve that same function for you.



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