

THOUGHTS ON EXCELLENT LEADERSHIP

by Karl Pister



THE
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The Five Pillars of Drama

For the past two years I have had the opportunity to be coached by one of the top minds in the entrepreneurial world, Paul Martinelli. He is a low-key individual, on the surface, but one of incredible wisdom underneath.

I was at a conference he conducted in late March and part of his teachings centered around what were called the pillars of drama. It encapsulated so well what leaders run into on a regular basis. Perhaps with themselves, and most certainly with who they lead.

While his teaching on this subject took some time, I will explain briefly these areas. If you want any elaboration on any of the topics, feel free to contact me through email (karl@coachinggroupinc.com or LinkedIn).





Pillar #1 – Not knowing the whole story

There are significant amounts of writing currently about the danger of biases. Most people read those articles and shake their head about how other people can have those problems.... however, all of us have these biases. If you struggle with that word, then substitute in the word 'mental filter'. What constitutes this filter? It is a lightning-fast, mental search engine that fills us with opinion, direction, and perceived correctness. And based on the results of that search, we construct our own story, a narrative if you will, about what is happening is the current situation.

Sadly, few take the time to move, initially, past the first filtered response, thus allowing the partial story to become the foundation for their next steps in the situation.

As leaders, since people look to you for cues on those next steps, overlooking getting the whole story to balance your filters can be fatal.

Pillar #2 – Jumping to Conclusions

Certainly this pillar bases off the first error of not knowing the whole story, but it has its own unique problems. Again, based on the mental filters, people start to assign meaning, using phrases such as:



Well, we all know what that means or doesn't that remind you of something else she did or you know what happened before

And all of those could be correct! And almost never are.

How to counter-act those statements when you feel them well up within yourself, or if you are in a group conversation and you hear those statements?

Within yourself, establish some check points, such as,

Are all my facts correct?

How do I know that?

Who should I bring in as a sounding board?

Why am I going down this path in the first place?

Within a group, the following statements put a fast brake on the rising tide of gossip and supposition:

We need to be careful with what we are saying...have we checked with this person to see what the intent was?

I don't feel comfortable taking this any further without bringing him/her into the conversation

As leaders, I firmly believe that we are morally obligated to make such statements, since silence is widely considered consent.



Pillar #3 – Making Stuff Up

Once the pillars #1 and #2 are in place, then comes the creative part of making up, or bringing up past events that would help the ever-growing narrative to have deeper meaning, or that helps us justify our narrative. This usually happens fast and again is mostly based on those filters that run our lives most of the time.

The famed psychologist Carl Yung once wisely stated “until we make our unconscious conscious, it will rule our lives and we will call it fate”.

The closer the situation hits home with sensitive events from our past, the more rapid and elaborate the stories can become.

I am not talking about a deep psychosis here, lest you think I am going off the deep end. I am referring to the normal reactions that are the base of some of the puzzling conversations you hear your staff having around the nurse’s station, or in the conference room before the meeting starts. While it may seem innocuous, it can be a treasure-chest of insight into the thinking that can destroy the forward growth of a team.

Pillar #4 – Looking to be Offended

We all know people that seem to be delighted in being offended. For whatever reason, there is a permanent chip on the shoulder.



Now, admittedly, there are those who have suffered greatly in life and, thus, their first reaction is one of caution, lest hurt occur again.

However, there is a high bar set by the physician and author, Viktor Frankl, who suffered through four years in the Nazi death camps. He established the powerful insight of:

Between stimulus and response, there is a space.

In that space is our power to choose our response.

In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

At the end of the day, our response is always a choice. We have that privilege and responsibility.

Pillar #5 – Ignoring Noble Intent

It should be obvious that few people wake up in the morning wanting to make trouble or drama. Sadly, many people just want to make it through the day.

I have found the ‘double standard test’ first created by Aaron Beck, to be a good check that leaders can use when confronted with contentious situations.

Merely pulling someone, or a group, aside, and asking them the question:

Before we go further down this current path, let me ask you. If



you were Jane, how would you want people to respond to you right now?

I have never had someone respond with:

Well, I would want them to be angry and judgmental with me, and I would certainly want them to start punitive actions because of what their erroneous assumptions were

But that is exactly what occurs unless you, as a leader, step in to change the mindset, not only on this pillar, but on all of them.





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