



And Now You Know the Rest of the Story

Thoughts on leadership
by Karl Pister



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Paul Harvey, the late, well-known radio personality, had a daily show for years where he would relate the details of stories that many of us knew on the surface, but rarely the deeper facts. It was called *"The Rest of the Story"*.

A recent, rest-of-the-story taught me a deep lesson of the importance of taking the time to know people's stories, for many times the 'cover' of the book might lead us to think of another narrative.





I live in a smaller town and on my way to the bigger city I drive by a gas station where I have poured thousands of gallons into the car's tank over the thirty-some years of commuting. I know all of the attendants and they know me. There has been surprisingly little turnover in personnel over the years. It is family owned and everyone seems to be a son, daughter, cousin, niece or nephew.

During the past year a new person showed up. One that is young by physique, but old in the face. This, from my experience, is usually from a life that has been tough and challenging. He has always been pleasant, seems to always call people older than him 'boss' and has a ready smile, through his scraggly beard that blends onto a neck covered by tattoos.

Once, last summer, he seemed a bit down. The station wasn't busy, so I asked if all was OK. He said, through some emotion, that he had put down his pit-bull that morning, after a brief illness. His feelings for his pet were obvious, and we probably talked around ten minutes before another car pulled in. That was the theme of our conversations over the next few months. Touching base on how he was doing, and how his other dog was adjusting to the loss of her buddy.

Just last week, my wife and I pulled in and he was on shift. Again, it wasn't too busy and he asked if I had heard about his Harley. I hadn't and he told me that it had been stolen



and he had finally recovered it, but that it was pretty beat up. I asked how he was going to fix it and he indicated he would do the work. Now, being a complete incompetent with anything mechanical, I was more than impressed and asked him how he knew about mechanics to that degree.

“Oh, I grew up working on bikes. I’ve always liked that. After I got my degree, I did a lot of design work for bikes. I left that job to come here to work since my grandfather is having a tough time and he needed some help around the station....”

Degree?!?! Ok, didn’t see that one coming... oh, judgmental me!

My curiosity pounced and I was soon finding out that he had a degree in design engineering from a mid-west technical college, had worked with mechanical design, and had moved west to help the family business during a tough time for the family.

I drove away wondering how many times in my career I had assumed one narrative when a deeper dive would have revealed abilities, dreams, and talents that could have enhanced performance, relationship, talent development, and a myriad of other things.

So just a reminder to do an inventory of assumptions in your circle of acquaintances. Is there anyone who might be on the sidelines due to your inaccurate thoughts? Will you be willing to dig in there to know the deeper story? Don’t think that just



one conversation will do it. But over time it will be worth every minute you invest, in ways that might surprise you.

Take the time to know the 'rest of the story' regarding those you lead.





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