

The Therapy of Disappointment

This month's newsletter starts with an admission of an error in January's edition when I attributed the lines "even the best laid Plans of mice and men often go astray" to John Steinbeck, instead of Robert Burns the famous Scottish poet. To my Scottish readers in particular, my apologies!

This serves as a good departure point for considering two mistakes leaders are prone to make. We have covered the tendency to avoid accountability and leaders believing that they ought to pretend to know everything, or have a strong opinion about everything.

Leaders frequently struggle with poor communication skills about which they do little to improve themselves. The single biggest reason for adverse social interaction between people, whether in the family, the neighborhood, the community or office, is poor communication.

Poor communication goes beyond inadequate verbal expression. Poor verbal expression is clearly a significant component in the cocktail of bad interaction but it is not alone. Great communication involves much more than the skeleton of good words, it needs the flesh and sinew of explanation, debate and the blood of listening, and responsive engagement to make expressions and interaction come alive. Get out from behind the desk and go talk to your team; the response may stagger you!

Fortunately not many, but nevertheless still too many, fail to resist the twin temptations of fear and greed. All leaders will experience these two emotional pressure points throughout their careers, and the way they are dealt with is by a decisive decision to give neither of these deceitful bacteria a single foothold in one's business of leading.

Fear is an emotion that serves as a warning of impending danger. Consequently it cautions us about possible adverse consequences that lie ahead. The fear that often grips leadership concerns possible personal consequences for advancing views, or making decisions they believe to be correct, but that run counter to popular views or the status quo.

Such fear inhibits leaders from doing the right thing, or not being strong enough to stop the wrong thing being done.

On the other hand where fear restrains and restricts individuals from the right course of action, greed generally encourages leaders to reach, or over-reach, for more than they should, or legitimately have. Over-reaching usually results in a loss of balance and stability. Consequently it is only a question of time before the confidence of one's peers and subordinates is lost, and disdain replaces respect. Careers always pay a higher price, than what greed achieves.

Last month we alluded to the redemptive effect of disappointments and promised to develop the idea further. Charles Spurgeon the famous Englishman of the 19th century wrote "Many men owe the grandeur of their lives to their tremendous difficulties." Adversity and trials with their associated disappointments, hold a mirror before a person's soul (their emotions, values, feelings, world-views and self perspective) that should cause them to do one of several, if not all things: dig deep within themselves to summon up courage and strengths they did not think they had, walk more humbly where before they strode arrogantly, become sensitive to reassessing their spiritual condition, and being more understanding of the weaknesses and disappointments of others.

Those who have endured the pain of failure, missed opportunities, wrong judgments and who have been willing to look in the mirror of such experiences, and observe carefully what they see, will tell you that such moments were cathartic in their personal development. Whilst never wanting to experience such anguish again, they would not have it any other way, for such pain, is usually the making and maturing of them as leaders. So next time trials and adversities arise, seize and engage with them with quiet determination; they will do far more for your character and personal maturing than you ever imagined possible.

Until next month and the wonder of Mount Hope, Yebo

P.S. Have you visited www.stennyafrika.com

