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Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 006

June 27 2011

Greetings!

We continue to live in interesting times. Since I last wrote this eZine, we find that the state of New York just become the sixth state to legalize same-sex marriage, easily one of the most radical changes of civilization in our lifetime; US Airways has allowed a man to board one of their flights wearing little more than women's panties and a bra -- something no woman would be allowed to do; and Left-leaning Media Mogul Chris Wallace insulted Republican Presidential Candidate Michelle Bachmann by asking her in a public interview if she is "a flake" (which he clearly believes she is.)

In spite of all of this, I remain galvanized to live life to its fullest. Read carefully this issue of Uncommon Sense, and you'll understand why.

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood

Differences Between Coach and Mentor

As a result of the last couple of columns, I've received almost a dozen inquiries about the distinctions between a coach and a mentor, so I am devoting this column to that very question.

First, I wouldn't get overly wrapped up in whether you are calling someone who is helping you become a Transition Figure a *coach* or a *mentor*. Having said that, there are some distinctions so perhaps it would be useful to spell them out.

Coaches are often formal positions (even if they don't carry the word "coach" in their title) and thus, they have some formal authority. Your sales manager may coach you on the sales call you just completed in his presence.



And you need to acknowledge his authority and respect it. A mentor, by contrast, is someone who probably does not have any formal authority over you per se, and the only authority he or she has is that which you lend to him/her. A mentor is your mentor because you approached her and asked her to be your mentor and she agreed to do so. Not always the case with a coach.

Coaches certainly do ask questions, usually to get you thinking about your performance, but mentors tend to ask a greater number of questions, as often as not to glean understanding themselves. I, like many professional coaches, charge a fee for my services as a coach, but not all persons who do the work of coaching charge. A formal or informal mentor relationship typically does not see money changing hands.

Coaches usually have a narrowly defined focus, helping you improve performance in a specific area, say public speaking, or getting your website up and running efficiently, or launching your online newsletter. Mentors, by contrast, typically have a broader, more panoptic view to helping you evolve from point A to point B.

Finally, I think it safe to say that of the two, the mentor relationship is a bit more intimate. The mentor really does (or should) care about you as a person - a total person. The coach, on the other hand, cares about your performance in a given area. It's a less intimate relationship that is based on a uni-dimensional aspect of your life, as opposed to your total life.

Have you found a coach or a mentor yet? If so, I congratulate you. If not, I invite you to make it a priority and begin reaping the dividends.

Being Prescriptive - Being Descriptive

Two Terms that Clarify Much

I'd like to open by explaining the difference between the word *descriptive* and the word *prescriptive*. The two words are very important to keep in mind and help explain a lot of things in life.

Descriptive refers to merely describing what is happening. It points things out, tells it like it is, and articulates what is going on without putting a value judgment on it. *Prescriptive* refers to advocating for a point of view, telling how things should be, not are.

In writing about differences between Left and Right in terms of political philosophy and world-view, it is easy to be prescriptive - it is easy to put out a viewpoint, and to advocate for a particular ideal in line with one's bias.

Most writing in this genre is prescriptive in nature - and there's nothing innately wrong with this. In the marketplace of ideas, one must vie for the attention and allegiance of others precisely by being prescriptive.

It's more difficult to try to keep one's bias in check and write in a descriptive vein. But doing so is oftentimes more helpful in maintaining balance, detachment, and objectivity. Being descriptive can gain one credibility. I'll give a simple example. Say you come to me looking for a lawyer and you are hoping I can refer you to someone. So I tell you, "You *MUST* go to Warren Spears! He's the best in the nation at this kind of law."

But what if it turned out that I have an arrangement with Warren Spears whereby I receive a \$500 Referral Fee every time I refer someone his way that becomes a billable client? You would be well within bounds to wonder whether my motivation for introducing you to Warren Spears was based on my high opinion of him, or whether it was instead based upon the

financial incentives I have for doing so. Warren Spears may, in fact, be a first-rate attorney. But I think it safe to say that you would trust my recommendations more if you knew I was making them without any sort of reward for doing so.

Neutrality, though rare, can breed trust and credibility.

This distinction between being *prescriptive* and being *descriptive* can be helpful in many venues and it's important that you remain cognizant of them. I believe the best approach with respect to these two ideas is two-fold:

1) Maintain balance in your usage of the two.

2) Openly state which of the two you are utilizing. Newspapers (and the news media in general) are supposed to be descriptive, not prescriptive, in their reporting. The only exception would be the Opinion Pages, where being prescriptive is understood to be the norm.

But the truth of the matter is that newspapers, which are, by and large, Left of center in their bias, are generally prescriptive (i.e., slanted Leftward.) It's not that I want them slanted Rightward - but I would prefer they went back to their origins of being simply descriptive - of reporting the news regardless of where the chips fall.



In the next issue of Uncommon Sense I will give a fascinating example (descriptively) of how one newspaper substitutes news reporting for religion, of all things. Stay tuned.

Forthcoming eBook: On Resumes

I receive a lot of requests to help individuals with their resumes, something I seem to have a strong grasp of. Hence, I am nearing the final edit stage

of a significant publication that will walk you through the step-by-step process of transforming the average resume into a stunning document that will increase your odds of garnering consistent interviews. Stay tuned for details.

From Ara's Journal

I am reading a fascinating book I picked up just the other day. It's titled *Divinity of Doubt: The God Question* and its author is the brilliant Vincent Bugliosi who famously prosecuted the Charles Manson murder case about 40 years ago as a young lawyer from the District Attorney's office in Los Angeles. The book is, essentially, an argument as to why Bugliosi is an agnostic. The man takes no prisoners, skewering theists and atheists alike. His basic premise seems to be, *Since I (Vincent Bugliosi) have no basis for either believing or disbelieving in the existence of God, you don't either.* I will comment on that bit of folk-wisdom in a lengthy book review I'm working on which will be published by The Maxwell Institute later this year.



However, there is one thing he writes that I found particularly peculiar.

Bugliosi wonders about the logic of praying to God. He suggests that it would be more logical to pray to the devil. Mind you, as he believes in neither God nor the devil, he is not literally advising readers to actually start directing their prayers downward. But he argues that it makes more logical sense to do so if one believes in the power of prayer. The gist of his line of thinking is as follows:

Since God is supposedly good and means us no harm, and since the devil is supposedly bad and does mean us harm, it makes more sense to pray for mercy from the one that wants to hurt us. Hence, Bugliosi feels believers in prayer should direct those prayers towards the one who wants to hurt us, in the off-chance that those prayers might

be answered by a merciful devil who may leave us alone.

While a novel idea, I think the otherwise incisive mind of Bugliosi has demonstrated that even brilliant people can be patently foolish on occasion.

Let's look at it in more normative terms. Imagine a scenario where you have a villain like North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-il, and he wants to destroy you. And let's also imagine that you have a benevolent leader, say General David Petraeus of the United States, and he means you no harm.

If Kim Jong-il was exactly a mile to your south and was running in your direction to kill you, and General David Petraeus was exactly a mile to your north and you knew he would protect you from the North Korean dictator, what would you do? Would you throw yourself at the feet of Kim Jong-il and plead for mercy, hoping you would soften his heart and change his mind? Or, would you run to General David Petraeus and seek his protection?

I believe Mr. Bugliosi, whom I've met and conversed with, and whom I greatly respect, has exposed some deep intellectual and logical vulnerabilities here.

The World of Words

Building Your Power of Expression

Quash, verb

Pronunciation: kwô sh;
kwä sh

Meaning: This elegant and striking word has reference to the act of putting an end to something (like a rumor, or an argument, or an effort of some kind). It can also be used in the sense of voiding something, perhaps by a legal or parliamentary procedure.

Usage:



- *Just as I was about to get to my strongest pieces of evidence, the judge spoke out and, with gavel in hand, quashed my attempts to proceed.*
- *As hospital administrator, it is up to me to quash any rumors that our nursing staff will be losing their jobs.*
- *It is important that you quash any suspicions that she might be pregnant.*

Subscribers, the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" is now complete and has been sent out. If you have not received it, please communicate that to me via email (ara@aranorwood.com).

For more information on my work, follow me on Twitter ("Ara Norwood"), or on Facebook (keyword "Leadership Development Systems") or via my website: www.aranorwood.com

Sincerely,

Ara Norwood
Leadership Development Systems