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Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 097

June 10, 2015

Greetings!

Today is my birthday.

I am pleased to have made it through another year -- a year fraught with challenge, heartache, adventure, satisfaction, and lots of success.

I enjoy my birthday and so I am certain today will be a great day. I will be spending it doing things that are important to me: managing a team of Talent Development professionals, teaching some wonderful new students at the college (all of whom just became subscribers of *Uncommon Sense* as of last night), exercising, enjoying great food, and celebrating with friends and family as time allows.

The greatest birthday gift you could grant me is in sharing this issue of *Uncommon Sense* with someone you think might find it useful. Please do forward it or repost it on your own Facebook or LinkedIn page or other social media.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



Self-Development

Elephants Don't Bite

On May 15th in this publication (*Uncommon Sense* #95) I wrote a piece titled "Losing Customers: It's the Little

Things." I had described my experience in the purchase of several high-end suits from a retail store in Manhattan Beach, and I outlined a number of seemingly small problems that added up to a hunch that I would probably not continue shopping there. I described such things as the lack of responsiveness to my direct questions (forcing me to state the same question three times in succession), the lack of communication between employees (wherein they didn't answer each others' questions either), and the unkempt look of the clothing worn by an in-store salesman who is supposedly a role model of high-end clothing. My point was that we need to pay attention to the little things, the details, to ensure a good experience for our customers.

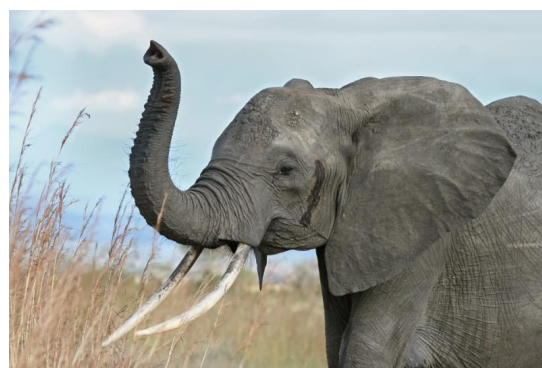
I had left two of my four suits there for tailoring and I think it is important to point out what my experience was following that transaction.

I went back two days after the suits were promised to be ready for pick up. When the manager, who seemed to be the only one in the store at the time, brought me the suits, I tried them both on. They fit nicely. However, I had explicitly instructed the tailor and the salesman to have buttons sewn into the pants for braces. (For those of you who do not know what braces are, they are suspenders that are affixed with buttons, not clips.) The buttons were not there. So I informed the manager. He did not apologize but he assured me that he would have them ready for me the same time the next day.

I showed up the same time the next day, and the manager was not in. After about 20 minutes, the salesman on the premises found the two suits. But the buttons were still not sewn in. The job simply had not been done, contrary to the direct assurances of the manager. It took several more days.

The pattern of poor service is rampant at this company. In spite of the fact that they produce a high quality product, I will absolutely not be going there ever again. There are just too many other sources that have figured out how to produce equally good quality along with top-flight service.

The morale: elephants don't bite! It's the little things, the gnats and mosquitos, that afflict customers.



The Elephant in the Room The Great Debate, Part 3 of 4

Dr. J's Third Statement:

The problem comes from the top down. Roger Ailes [President of Fox News] has stated his purpose repeatedly (look it up). The truth and right wing reportage are cognitive disjuncts, appealing to an ideological subset of the population. Simply look up the history of Roger Ailes for insight into his motivations. He has a captive audience of poorly informed acolytes who tune in to hear soothing right-wing propaganda. OK, is 18% truthfulness antithetical to truth? Not at all, there's that 18%.

My response:

Although I doubt he will remember me, I've known Roger Ailes since 1997 when I almost hired him as a private speech coach. This was before he went over to Fox News and the Fox Television Stations Group. At the time I was interacting with him, he ran a very successful consulting operation out of New York, and we talked several times, but in the end, I felt I couldn't afford him -- one of my few professional regrets.



Dr. J, you have framed your argument in an interesting way.

It sounds to me like you believe there is some obvious problem with Roger Ailes, and that all one has to do is "look it up" and they will find the dirty little secrets.

So I key in the name "Roger Ailes" in Google. First, I see the Wikipedia article on him. Nothing all that troubling there. Then I see an interview someone did with him recently. No big bombshells there. Then I see a blog that Mr. Ailes runs. But the fourth hit in Google is [a piece](#) by Rolling Stone magazine, So let's see what this publication has to offer us.

The Rolling Stone article, dated May 25, 2011, is titled "How Roger Ailes Built the Fox News Fear Factory" by Tim Dickinson. It is a well-written, researched-based article, and was enjoyable and interesting reading. However, the tagline gives some clues about the author's perspective: "The onetime Nixon operative has created the most profitable propaganda machine in history. Inside America's Unfair and Imbalanced Network." Sounds like the author has a bit of an axe to grind.

And sure enough, although well-written, the article is larded with the same exact tactics the author accuses Roger Ailes of -- a perfect example of projection. One need not read the entire 10,271 words to ascertain the author's low view of Roger Ailes.

Within the first 15 paragraphs, we learn that Roger Ailes:

- is likened to the Chinese dictator Mao
- fosters a culture of intimidation on par with the Soviet Union (as if one media personality has that much power and influence)
- has everyone, including his boss, Rupert Murdoch, afraid of him (a dubious claim if you know Rupert Murdoch)
- sells fear
- set up a network that was so magnetic that it inspired a viewer to burn the Koran (without ever once encouraging such an act)
- set up a network that is filled with anger, bombast, and paranoia, and that appeals to white resentment (what exactly is resented is never mentioned)
- stoked racial fears to elect a U.S. president (a first in presidential politics, repeated only in the 2008 election)
- waged a secret campaign (which must not be all that secret if the author knows about it)

- engaged in partisan assaults (as if this never happens from the Left)
- promotes only a far right agenda (even though the network has Leftists on the evening shows very regularly)
- is a cinematic villain
- is deeply paranoid himself, and
- is obese (yes, when all else fails, call your opponent fat.)

An impressive list. If all of that were true, it would be remarkable that such a person so devoid of normalcy could build a successful -- wildly successful -- television operation. How does a paranoid, obese, villainous, fear-mongering, angry, charismatic, racist thug pull off such a success story?

He doesn't. Only a clear-thinking, driven, ambitious professional with plenty of talent can. And that is what we are dealing with here. Roger Ailes is a brilliant strategist who knows what makes for successful television. He doesn't do things the way the tired, old networks do them. He has a clear and fresh vision of what TV news can be like. And his hunches have proven true.

Now, Dr. J, it is apparent to me that you have formulated some of your opinions of Roger Ailes by this very article -- or if not this article, then one cut from the same cloth.

Need I remind you that this article was published by an organization whose slipshod journalism and zero standards of ethics enabled it to recently put forth claims of a gang rape at the University of Virginia -- a gang rape that never took place? The only rape involved was the raping of the reputation of the fraternity it accused, its members, and the university in general, by the same despicable organization that has published this character assassination of Roger Ailes.

And what I cannot fathom is why an intelligent, bright, well-read gentleman such as yourself would read such an article, and then glibly accept it as true and valid without even the slightest bit of skepticism. You have the scholar's touch. You have the mind of a seasoned intellect. I'm just floored you demonstrate such uncritical acceptance of this author's diatribe.

And that, my friends, is the latest elephant in the room.

Normalizing the Abnormal: Bruce Jenner's Conundrum

In this short note I won't be referring to Bruce Jenner by his new name because in doing so, I feel I would be giving tacit endorsement of his decision to alter his gender, a decision I do not countenance, nor do I think he will over time.



Yet at the same time, I am cautious about forming firm and final opinions. This is new territory -- not just for me, but for society.

I will say that my gut instincts tell me that his decision to become a female is disquieting.

But what is even more disquieting is the way the media has spun this strange episode, and also how a large portion of the public is reacting.

For an instructive example of the latter, I had an experience recently with a friend of mine, HH. She and I go back about 42 years. I gave her her first ever guitar lesson. Now in her 50s, she plays guitar in a cover band, doing songs by the rock band Heart. HH is a deeply devoted Christian. She posted her opinion on her own Facebook page recently that she found what Jenner did to be both disgusting and disconcerting. She also emphasized that she hates no one and loves everyone, including Bruce Jenner.

But boy oh boy, did her "friends" attack HH! They felt she had no right whatsoever to express her opinion on her own Facebook wall unless her opinion was the same as their opinion, which was that what Bruce Jenner did to himself was a wonderful, beautiful, magical thing. HH tried gamely to defend herself, but her "friends" were quite hostile to her.

(As an aside, I should point out that I waited a day before getting into the action on her wall, essentially eviscerating the shallow thinking and clumsy logic of her so-called friends. It's not that I thought their comments had no value. I supposed they had archaeological value, in that they brought to mind what a conversation between Neanderthals might have been like anciently.)

Of course, I was just what HH's friends needed: a new enemy to sink their teeth into. I saw this coming, and in fact, I wrote in such a way as to invite the onslaught. It is my demented approach to entertainment as I got to be treated to a marvelous display of vitriol and venom, with people swearing at me, or calling me an abbreviated version of another man's name (I believe the name was Richard.) It was all quite fun for me, as I like to rattle the cages of bigots and other self-righteous riffraff and then watch their predictable twitching and belching, all of which suggests I have way too much time on my hands.

But serious questions still need to be addressed. What is it that causes a man like Bruce Jenner, now in his 60s, to accept the notion that he needs to alter his very gender? Is gender really meant to be all that fluid? If so, why do Leftists insist that gender is fluid but sexual orientation -- at least for homosexuals -- is anything but fluid? (Yet they would argue sexual orientation *is* fluid if it is something that could move a heterosexual outlook to a homosexual outlook -- but not the other way around.)

Also, what was it about placing Jenner's newfound photo on the cover of Vanity Fair in a way that was trying to make it appear as sexy as possible? Wasn't it enough that Jenner had done what he claims to have wanted to do his whole life and become a woman? Does placing the photo in its sexiest possible persona say anything about the agenda at Vanity Fair?

Finally, is Bruce Jenner (and all those who think what he did was a wonderful move) prepared to face the following facts:

- Johns Hopkins University, perhaps the premier

medical institution in the country, was the first American medical center to venture into "sex-reassignment surgery" back in the 1960s. But they discontinued the practice in the 1970s. Why? Because they found that when they compared those of a transgendered mindset who had the surgery to those of a transgendered mindset who did not have the surgery, the doctors at Johns Hopkins discovered that those who had the surgery ended up having no better psycho-social adjustments than those who did not have the surgery. In other words, having the surgery did not help such persons lead normal, balanced lives. They were *still* tortured souls.

- According to the Karolinska Institute in Sweden, a 30-year study which documented 324 people who underwent sex-reassignment surgery demonstrated that within a decade of having the surgery, they experience a suicide rate about 20 times the non-transgendered population.
- Finally, in the mind of one very competent medical professional with direct expertise in treating the transgender, sex change is in actuality, a biological impossibility. Former psychiatrist in chief at Johns Hopkins, Dr. Paul McHugh, [writes](#) "People who undergo sex-reassignment surgery do not change from men to women or vice versa. Rather, they become feminized men or masculinized women."
- There is another side to the story which contradicts the vacuous hype and glamor of those wanting to normalize the mutilation of one's gender and people can read such accounts at www.sexchangeregret.com.

It's hard not to feel sad for the conflicted, tortured feelings that the Bruce Jenners of the world experience. But the way the media glamorizes this oddity is certain to open the floodgates of this practice as more and more people are led to believe that the abnormal is actually normal.

The World of Words

Enigma

Building Your Power of Expression

Enigma, n.

Pronunciation: i'nigmə



Meaning: Anything that is mysterious, unusual, puzzling, or difficult to understand is considered an enigma. It can extend to a person as well. The adjective would be *enigmatic*.

Usage:

- *Her mode of speech was such that she came off sounding rather like an enigma.*
- *You are such an enigma, one minute brisk and abrupt, and the next minute gracious and chivalrous.*
- *The key to this enigma is understanding that he inherited millions yet has no training in money management.*

New subscribers, the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" should have been sent out to you already. 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