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Issue: # 122

June 30, 2016

Greetings!

Welcome back to another dose of reality!

So many life lessons to learn. Some are serious and consequential, while others less so. I share one of the less heavy observations my the "From Ara's Journal" column in this issue. I hope you enjoy it.

In the "Elephant in the Room" column, you'll find a continuation my response to my friend and contrarian, Dr. J, as I delve into the issue of income inequality.

Finally, in the Self-Development column, you'll see a quick but important story, and the lessons we might learn from it, as it pertains to the intricate an delicate balance of being task-driven versus relationship-driven.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



Self-Development

People

A busy professional walked into an office to retrieve a document that was being held for him. It was an important document. The department secretary who was holding it for him was just about to leave for lunch with several colleagues when

this busy professional briskly walked into the department office where his document was waiting for him. He had called in advance to apprise the department secretary of his impending arrival.

The department secretary, who was just about to walk out the door to go to lunch with 3 or 4 women who were standing in the lobby, walked back into her office to retrieve the document, while instructing a receptionist who was sitting there in the front lobby to have the busy professional sign for the document. The busy professional hurriedly took the pen from the receptionist and signed where the receptionist indicated. Then the department secretary returned with the document and handed it to the busy professional.

The busy professional gave a hasty "thank you" to the receptionist and the department secretary, and was in the process of making a speedy exit. The other women who were waiting for the department secretary were going out the door at the same time, and this slowed down the busy professional, who stood to the side in a show of polite deference to allow the ladies to exit the office first. He even held the door for them. As the department secretary was the last lady to exit the office, the busy professional was just starting to follow her out the door.

But then something happened.

The department secretary turned back to the receptionist and said, "We'll see you later, Estela." Then she turned and continued out the door.

The busy professional took a step out the door, . . . then stopped. He gazed back at the receptionist, Estela, and really looked at her for the first time. Prior to that, he was completely in task-mode, not at all in relationship-mode. But now he noticed the receptionist was looking at him and smiling, as if she knew something he didn't know.

And then a mist of realization descended upon the busy professional and he became aware of the situation. He knew this receptionist from a previous job many years ago. Theirs had been a warm relationship. But he hadn't seen her in almost 7 years. She was fully aware of who he was when he walked in the door, but because he was so focused on the task at hand, he hadn't so much as glanced at the receptionist. She was merely an object to him up to that point, handing him a pen, showing him where to sign, and, in spite of her extreme meekness and shyness, trying to get him to see her. Fortunately, the busy professional finally caught on, and took some time to converse with an old colleague. But it almost didn't work out that way.



This is a true story.

And the story is instructive on several fronts. One of the main takeaways is that sometimes when we are too riveted on the task at hand, we give undue neglect to relationships. We fail to notice people who ought to be noticed, acknowledged, respected, greeted, treated humanely. The busy professional started out failing on all fronts, and would have cemented that failure had the department secretary not stopped at the last possible moment and turned around and said something to Estela. Had that last comment not taken place by the department secretary, the busy professional would have abruptly walked out of that office, having interacted with a former colleague, and not have even seen her! Interesting to ponder how she might have felt, had that occurred.

Lesson: pay attention to the people around you. If you believe, as I do, that they are the most important resource of any organization, then they must be treated as the valuable resource they are. They must be noticed. They must be seen, not processed, not sorted, not viewed as an inanimate hurdle that must be cleared.

Think *relationships*.

The Elephant in the Room

Responding to the Leftist Paradigm, Part 2 of 10

Continuing my response to the challenge thrown my way by Dr. J after he read Issue #120 of *Uncommon Sense*, wherein he retorted:

It would be helpful to your argument to give examples of how the "Left," antagonistic as it appears to racism, income inequality, intervention into foreign wars, poverty, environmental destruction, Global Warming, insider trading, sexism, Creationism, pollution, disenfranchisement of voters, etc, poses an existential threat to the US. If anything, the progressives in this country appear host to its better angels.

The charge of income inequality is an interesting one and has been a regular rallying cry of Leftist propaganda for a very long time, probably originating with Karl Marx. It is an effective talking point for Leftists, not because it has merit, but because it *sounds* good, it makes Leftists *seem* fair-minded, and it implies that conservatives are mean-spirited, greedy, and only interested in getting rich at the expense of everyone else. It's also hard for conservatives to defend themselves against the charge because the Leftist need only spew out the glib accusation without even a smidgen of facts to back up the claim, while conservatives on the receiving end of such fact-free accusations would have to know something about history and economics in order to give a cogent response. So yes, playing the income inequality card has been an effective play for Leftists.

But the argument itself is as vacuous as an empty bag.

First, let's ask ourselves what Leftists have in mind when they whine about income inequality. We have to ask ourselves this because Leftists themselves rarely ever clarify their point, being content to merely spew out the emotionally-charged language and then leave it at that, thinking they have said something wise.

For instance, when a Leftist brings up income inequality, do they have in mind the notion that men earn more money than women when doing the same job, working the same number of hours, having the same qualifications, etc?

Perhaps some do. But that entire construct is a myth. In the instances where men earn more than women doing the same job, there are almost always valid reasons why this is so, reasons the

Left never bothers to acknowledge. Here's an example: young male doctors earn quite a bit more per year than young female doctors. That's a fact.



And the Left cry foul when they hear of this. But the Left never take into account the hard fact that young male doctors, on average, put in about 500 more labor hours per year than young female doctors. Would the Left now like to reconsider their knee-jerk response to the supposed inequality?

Furthermore, the Left never stops to consider the fact that if companies knew they could save money by paying women less than men, they would hire only women, as there would be an economic incentive to do so. Men would not be working very much at all. There would be virtually no male college professors, no male sales professionals, no male healthcare workers, no male postal workers, no male airline pilots. Thus, it's a myth that men earn more than women for doing precisely the same work, precisely the same hours, and with precisely the same qualifications.

Let's now turn our attention to something else Leftists may have in mind, the radical and far-fetched, fairy-tale notion that everyone should earn exactly the same amount of money, no matter what they do. I know, to a sane thinker, that sounds unbelievable, but many a die-hard Leftist thinks precisely in such terms. Thus, the seasoned CEO of IBM should be paid the same amount of income as the newly hired mailroom clerk. The world-renowned surgeon should earn not a penny more than the orderly whose sole job is to push a cart of medical supplies around from one area of the hospital to another.

I don't need to debate such drivel. This line of thinking on the part of the Left demonstrates a paucity of understanding of the difference between value creation and financial earnings. I seriously doubt that Dr. J, who is himself a well-paid medical professional (and deservedly so) really believes his newest receptionist should earn the same amount of money as himself.

Using random numbers to simply make a point, would any Leftist who gave it a moment's thought truly prefer to live in a society in which everyone's annual income is \$50,000 as opposed to a society with an average annual income of

\$75,000 but in which annual incomes ranged from \$10,000 to \$1 million? Doesn't it make sense to generate greater overall wealth, even if there is income inequality?

Finally, consider this fact: people who make less than \$20,000 a year spend more than a third of their time in passive leisure - watching television, playing video games, etc. Those making more than \$100,000 spent less than one-fifth of their time in this way because they made a decision to trade in more leisure time for more focused work and the additional dollars that often result from doing so.

People who earn more typically spend much more time commuting and engaging in activities that are required to produce income, as opposed to activities that are optional (such as going to bars or watching TV.) In many cases, it's a matter of choice.

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

Shameless Plug

Norwood Delivers Coaching Program

It was my distinct pleasure to deliver a full-day workshop yesterday on the subject of coaching. Speaking to a small and intimate group of business professionals, I had the opportunity to school them in how effective coaches approach their craft and provide leadership to their teams.

We spent much time focusing on a wide array of topics, including the notion of listening effectively, asking the right questions, seeing wholes while assessing the situation, structuring a coaching interaction, targeting specific areas of focus, building trust and strengthening relationships, and much more. Several role-plays and practice exercises were included, and the participants were uniformly positive in their critique of the program.



The full-day program is called **Leader As Coach**. If your organization could benefit from such a program, send me a message via email (ara@aranorwood.com).

From Ara's Journal

Humor: Different Stokes. . .

While giving a presentation recently to about 30 adult males, I was in the middle of making some disparaging remarks about a certain genre of literature. I then got into "humor mode" and stated, "People sometimes ask me if such literature ever has any sort of value. I think it does. Whenever I am suffering from insomnia, I turn to precisely this sort of literature, so I can read it and *bore myself to sleep!*" Everyone in the room burst into laughter. And truthfully, I thought it was a funny, albeit spontaneous, quip.



A senior leader out in the hallway overheard the laughter and later, when we crossed paths, asked me what the laughter was all about. I replayed for him my sardonic and funny wise-crack. And I got almost no reaction.

This leader wasn't bothered by the line. But he just listened and said, "Oh. Okay. Got it," with a complete dead-pan expression.

Not everyone has a sense of humor. And what one man finds funny, another man will find bland.

We are all cut from different cloth. I find the new TV show on TBS called "Angie Tribeca" to be extremely hilarious. Others I know would probably barely tolerate it.

I guess the important thing is to know what makes us enjoy moments of humor, and then to seek out those moments. Life is too tragic too much of the time to go for very long without a good laugh.

The World of Words

Conflation

Building Your Power of Expression

Conflation, n.

Pronunciation: kən'flāSH(ə)n



Meaning: The merging of two or more things (ex. sets of information, texts, ideas, etc.) into one. When you blend two concepts (steroid use and cancer; advanced degrees and high paying jobs; cell phones and loss of social skills), you are conflating them. The term is usually, though not always, used in the sense of disapproval, as in the conflation taking place is not warranted.

Usage:

- *The new edition is a conflation of the previous two publications.*
- *There is still way too much conflation taking place in her presentation.*

- *Don't conflate these two separate issues, as they are unrelated.*

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