



In my opinion...

DEAN SAYS:

The Marks of Professionalism, Part V— Nothing but the Truth

Qualities that clearly make one individual appear professional when compared to his or her peers: compassion, justice, common sense, and a wholehearted determination to always tell the truth.

We live in a society that no longer places a high price on telling the truth. In fact, we sometimes seem to pride ourselves on stretching veracity to a point so thin that just one more whisper would snap it like a dry twig.

Between media commercials that reward deceit, "Who ate all the *Cracklin' Oat Bran*?" to those who suggest that little white lies are really just a part of life, "Only her hairdresser knows for sure!" to the social scientists and pseudo-scientists who suggest that the cruelest of the cruel is to speak truthfully.

Now there's little question that truth must always be spoken kindly—oh, how I wish I could remember to do that—nevertheless when faced with a choice, the true professional, that man or woman of genuine integrity, will always tell the truth.

Back at Christmastime, my wife completed a roll of film and took it to the

nearby photo shop for processing. These folks have always done a pretty good job, so we've come to rely on their service. "Thursday. It'll be ready on Thursday," the young clerk intoned.

It fell to me to pick up the much awaited photos of "Christmas on the Farm." At the appointed hour I dutifully arrived with the little claim slip from the processing envelope in my hand. "Sorry," the clerk rattled grimly, "We're out of paper. Your prints will be ready tomorrow."

"Out of paper. Out of Paper?" I thought to myself as I lumbered back to my car. How can a conscientious owner of a photo shop be out of paper. That's as idiotic as the snack shop that advertises, "World's Greatest Onion Rings" being out of onions.

Friday afternoon, I trudged back into the photo shop, presented my claim slip only to be told, "Our processor's been broke for two days and was just repaired an hour ago. We'll have your photos in 45 minutes." I turned and left the shop, deciding not to come back until Saturday.

Saturday afternoon, over 24 hours after my last visit, I popped in to the photo shop and handed over my claim slip. "Our processor has been down for a couple of days," the clerk said, apparently not recognizing me as a frequent visitor. "We'll have your pictures in 40 minutes."

Wayne calls me "Mr. Patience." I have earned that misnomer with pains-

taking attention to blowing my top at the slightest delay in my planned schedule. It was all I could do to turn and leave the shop without destroying something or someone on the way out.

Forty minutes and twenty five seconds later I was back in the shop. The owner waited on me and gave me my photos. He did not say he was sorry for the delay. He did not try to explain what had happened. He didn't even say "Thank you" when I paid him.

Through a determined series of falsehoods, plus an attitude that can only be described as haughty, the photo shop owner had lost a customer, and made an enemy. I now make it a point to tell everyone who will listen about that photo shop. So far, I've suggested to several other town residents that if they patronize that shop, the processing of their valued photos may be delayed.

Did the shop run out of paper? Did the machine break? Is 45 minutes really 24 hours long? And what about saying, "We're really sorry, but..."

What do you do when you've promised the architect or engineer a quote on that new alarm system, and you've missed the deadline? Do you tell a lie? Blame someone else who really had nothing to do with the delay? Or do you speak honestly and kindly, accepting responsibility for your action?

What about your employees? Do you have one of those classics who can never admit he or she is wrong? It's always someone else who contributed to the error. Well chances are that employee treats your customers the same way. Instead of giving truthful answers, the truth is always slightly twisted to excuse the error.

When a professional makes a mistake, he or she explains what has happened truthfully and contritely, and expects his or her employees to do the same. The plain fact is there just is no excuse for not telling the truth.

Psychologist M. Scott Peck has written a book, *People of the Lie*. Get it. Read it. And join the growing number of professionals who speak truthfully. It's just one more quality that sets those apart who have determined to be the real leaders in our industry. □

The Moore-Wilson SIGNALING REPORT

January/February 1991
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