



**In my opinion...**

**DEAN SAYS:**

## **The Marks of Professionalism, Part IX—**

# **Due Diligence**

"I feel like that Rodney What's-his-name. I just don't get any respect." The young designer had just come back from a meeting with his boss. It seems like every time he's called down to management row, he comes back to his desk in a high state of stress.

"What is it going to take before they start to treat me like a professional?" he wailed.

A professional, indeed! But, what qualities do mark a man or woman as a "professional?" So far in this series, I've suggested that *compassion, justice, common sense, commitment to excellence, a wholehearted determination to always tell the truth, attention to details, going the second mile* and *a sense of humor* are marks of a professional. This time I add to the list *practicing due diligence*.

Did you notice how all the "legal beagles" ears perked up when I used that term? Giving or practicing due diligence sounds like either something that will lead you into or keep you out of court.

It is, in fact, a term that lawyers love to throw around during liability suits.

One or another of the attorneys present is trying to prove that someone failed to practice due diligence, while the opposing side is trying to illustrate that due diligence was given in the particular set of circumstances.

For my purposes, I am using the term as a catch-all for countless small details that can seem to either bolster or topple an up-and-coming professional. Similar to its first cousin, "Attention to Details," giving due diligence is a mind-set that can be learned, if one has not already embodied this characteristic. Perhaps a little quiz will help illustrate my point.

- Do you answer incoming letters the same day you receive them?
- Do you return phone messages as quickly as you arrive back at your desk?
- Do you open incoming mail, categorize it, and then read through it in such a way that you only handle each piece of paper once?
- Do you begin your day by making a list of what needs to be accomplished that day?
- Do you also separate your "To Do" list into the "need to dos" and the "nice to dos?"
- Do you make certain that you do at

least one "nice to do" each day so the "nice to dos" don't become the "never dids?"

- When introduced to someone, do you pay attention, not only to their name, but also who they are and what help they might be to you in the future?
- Do you factor in the concerns of others when you make a decision that affects those around you?
- Do you pay particular attention to time, not becoming fanatical about being early, nor becoming chronic in your lateness?

Well, these are just a few of many items which can be measures of whether or not the person who aspires to professionalism is practicing due diligence. It really is a care-giving attitude. It illustrates a mind-set that is genuinely interested in making certain that the "little things" receive proper emphasis, so they do not later blossom into "big things."

The professional in the signaling industry is no more easily excused in this area, than is any other sincere businessperson. Yes, we all have busy, even hectic, schedules. But, there is never any really good reason for not extending common courtesy to those around us by giving due diligence to those things that simply must be done well and on-time.

It's like the local radio announcer who must join the network precisely at 2:59:30. The professionalism of the announcer is judged by the precision with which he backtimes the last recording leading into the network join. Whether that last recording is a musical selection or a commercial spot announcement, the announcer is expected to have both planned and executed his plan so well, that the segue to the network is seamless. It's the kind of work that the station manager rewards with a smile.

Practicing due diligence is one way to make certain you will get the job done with precision, grace, style and class. It's just one more of the marks of a professional. And, it's a mark to which you and I can aspire. □

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