



In my opinion...

DEAN SAYS:

Did Anyone Even Notice?

I would like to speak directly this time to the person who's reading this column in the midst of professional discouragement.

"Professional discouragement?" you ask. "I've certainly heard of discouragement, but I usually associate that negative word with personal feelings. How can someone be 'professionally discouraged?'"

All right, I will grant you that most of the time when we think of discouragement it is in a personal context. A person may be discouraged because he or she is too fat or too thin; or going bald or having too full a head of hair; or didn't have the advantage of a college education, or has advanced degrees that give an impression of over qualification for many jobs; or is always taking life too seriously, or too frivolously; or is always fighting at home, or has such a state of peacefulness at home that life is really boring. The list is as extensive as there are numbers of people who have strong feelings about the numerous personal aspects of their lives. But what about this idea that one can be discouraged in

one's professional life. Can this really happen?

Recently, I had a phone call from a friend from the radio broadcasting industry. We used to work together nearly thirty years ago at a little 1000-watt-daytime/250-watt-nighttime radio station in northwestern Pennsylvania. You might say that we grew up together in radio. My friend is now a major advertising executive.

He called, he said, to dump. He was frustrated beyond belief. And, he was as discouraged as he had ever been in his life. Why? "Because," he told me, "I'm sick and tired of fighting every day to do what's right."

Further inquiry on my part brought out the rest of the story. It seems that he works for a boss who also has come up through the ranks of broadcasting. But this boss has never really captured the vision of what broadcasting can really be. It's as if he's content to work hard on a rather limited agenda of activities—many directed toward "bean counting"—draw his salary, but never really connect his soul to his daily work.

My friend, on the other hand, has always been committed to the magic of broadcasting. He's a true believer that radio can be an effective tool to communicate really important ideas to people who genuinely want to know those ideas. In various settings, my friend has displayed almost evangelistic zeal for the vision he captured many years ago. Everything he does in his career is tied

directly or indirectly to making this vision come alive in himself and others. He's not just an employee, he's a zealot.

Yet, he's discouraged in his professional life because his zeal goes unrecognized, unappreciated and even unwelcomed by his boss. "The man is not even capable of recognizing the valuable tool that I could be if he would only put my dedication and vision to work in his behalf," my friend laments. "I consistently make every effort to do every task in a professional manner that will bring credit to my company. I ask myself time and again, 'Did anyone even notice?'"

Maybe you're like my friend. In the midst of the current economic downturn where you are having to fight for what's right every single day—fight with people around you who have never captured the vision of what could be, who have never made the magic of what they do part of their souls—you are suffering from "professional discouragement." If you are, take heart.

I come to you today with a message of hope and of cheer. I want to assure you that as you take up your daily tasks with a determination to do what is right, no matter what it may cost you with those who do not understand, there is a throng of us in the grandstand cheering you on as you face your professional foes.

We're there cheering for you because we've been where you now are. We, too, have felt the discouragement of having to continually fight for what is right in the midst of people who lack vision for what could be. We, too, have been verbally abused or secretly laughed at by those above us who think our vision is foolish in a society where the cavalier are praised and those who are dedicated to righteousness are shunned. We, too, have been sick in our inner being at having to make end-run after end-run around those who build barricades instead of bridges. We cheer you on today, knowing that you will cheer us on tomorrow.

Did anyone even notice? Yes, we did, and not only that, we do notice what you're doing. Please, hear us cheer, "Press on! Press on!" □

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