



In my opinion...

DEAN SAYS:

***The Marks of Professionalism,
Part VIII—***

A sense of humor

Her beauty was striking. Tall, well-dressed, expressive eyes, gentle smile, and yet a very determined young woman.

"It is tough being a woman in business. All I want is to be treated with respect and to be known as a professional." What did she mean? What qualities 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 and going the second mile* are marks of a professional. This time I add to the list *a sense of humor*.

Please don't confuse a sense of humor with immature practical jokes or with malicious black comedy that has been popularized in recent years. A real sense of humor always entertains and encourages others without knowingly causing hurt. In other words, a genuine sense of humor is born out of love. It is not motivated by hate or discord or disgust or distrust or any other of the negative emotions.

A sense of humor can spell the

difference between being consumed by stress in the normal give and take of a day's activities, or taking stress in stride. Faced with the moment by moment crises of a typical business, the ability of the true professional to handle each experience with aplomb will most often depend on whether or not the individual has developed a genuine sense of humor.

Notice I said "developed" a sense of humor. It is quite possible to change one's outlook from one that is usually quite humorless to one that looks at life with a smile and a twinkle in the eyes. Just begin to find the smile and laughter that God so cleverly hides in every experience of life.

"Does God have a sense of humor?" the national radio speaker asked his third son in a broadcast interview. "Sure, Dad," was the reply. "He made my brother, Joel, didn't He?"

And, it's just this kind of positive mental attitude that can carry you through your day. You see, humor tends to cause the body to relax and roll with the punches. It is a proven medical fact that a good laugh, or even a quiet chuckle, can help you relieve tension that builds inside your body. In the midst of a moment of humor, your body releases chemicals into the bloodstream that help muscles relax, deepens breathing, increases the blood flow to the brain and has a generally positive effect on the various bodily systems.

How does one begin to develop a real sense of humor? Start by looking

for the smile that is hidden in every situation. Even the most irritating letter or memo has some element that can bring comic relief. Even when your boss has just yelled at you for something, tucked away inside the experience is some little gem of humor just waiting for you to find it.

Recently, I read a letter from an irate executive. In the letter he told an opponent in a protection controversy that he no longer had respect for the woman or for the company she represents. He was angry that his opponent had enthusiastically fought for what the opponent believed was right. He was disturbed that the opponent had questioned whether the study group the writer chaired was performing without bias. He whined and he cried throughout the letter. "No humor there," you might think. But yet there was.

Here was someone so pompous, so consumed with himself, so convinced that he had all the right political connections, so determined that what he thought mattered, that he presumed to attack the sincere efforts of this dedicated, professional businesswoman who happened to have a different view. After she wrote a kind and gentle reply, we imagined him opening it, and chuckled at how seriously he took the issue.

Recently I was riding with a friend who has always driven aggressively. Suddenly, a little Chevette darted in front of us. As he hit the brakes, my friend whooped with glee. "I sure hope when they get there, they won't be too early," my friend chortled.

"What's gotten into you?" I asked, remembering the shaken fist and curse-filled air of similar incidents in the past.

"I decided that getting angry only hurt me," he explained. "At least this way I get a little laugh."

It is important as signaling professionals that we concentrate our efforts to provide the highest level of fire and burglary protection. But in the midst of the seriousness of our efforts, let's not forget to look for the smile that God has placed in these daily vignettes along the roads of our lives. For a real sense of humor is, indeed, one of the marks of the true professional. □

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