



I have an old college friend whose wife grew up spending her summers on Nantucket and ultimately inherited the small summer home that her family purchased in the 1950's. For years they have been inviting my wife and me to come for a visit. This summer the moon and stars aligned themselves so we went in July. Beautiful place and what a relief from the heat. On this historic island 30 miles off the coast of Massachusetts the high was in the 70's and the low in the upper 50's. No A/C required! I have never seen so many private jets and 100 foot yachts in one place in all my life. We had a wonderful time.

However, when we left Nantucket Sunday afternoon is when the fun really began! A storm hit the northeast so our flight from Nantucket to Philadelphia on a commuter was delayed for 5 hours. We landed in Philadelphia at 9:15 p.m. We slowly taxied to the gate, got within 100 feet and stopped. No more parking spaces. At 10:00 p.m. I called our Dean from the plane to give him a heads up that I may have trouble getting back for a 10:00 a.m. meeting the next morning with some out-of-town "Very Important People." This meeting easily was the most important meeting I was to be involved in since coming to the University.

We finally got off the plane at 11:30 p.m. The Philadelphia airport looked like a MASH unit with thousands of stranded travelers (I did pick up some creative ideas on how to sleep comfortably in an airport). Our flight to Columbia, long since canceled and our bags missing in action, we ran to the gate where the last Columbia flight was to leave in 15 minutes. When we got there it was a ghost town. The airlines were in such a state of confusion even the TV screens didn't have updated information. The ticket counter was now closed. I called the airlines on my cell phone and the automated response system said it would be a 20 minute wait just to talk to somebody. CLICK!

We called the Marriott, tried to get a room, but they were full. All is not lost, music to my ears, the nice man said the Hampton Inn next door had rooms available. We bribed the Marriott shuttle to drop us off at the Hampton Inn at about 12:30 a.m. The guy at the desk said "Why did they tell you we had rooms, we are booked solid, but I understand the Embassy Suites has space." There were no taxis, so we walked about a half mile to the Embassy Suites. Not a bad walk without bags!

We finally got a room for \$168 plus tax (expensive sleep per hour). About 1:30 a.m. I finally reached the airlines and they had booked us on the Monday morning 7:00 a.m. flight (the 6:00 a.m. flight,

which would have gotten us to Columbia at 9:00 a.m., was oversold with a waiting list). We got up at 5:00 a.m. to make sure we could get our tickets and get through security in time. Good thing we arrived early because the airport was a mess. Our flight to Columbia was uneventful, but the fun was not quite over. We landed at exactly 10 a.m.

I know you are wondering where the leadership message is in this. Just hang on, I promise it's coming!

Our bags had somehow miraculously arrived on the 6:00 a.m. flight and were sitting by the lost baggage office along with about 50 others. I went into the men's room, shaved, put on a clean shirt, sped downtown breaking several traffic laws along the way, left my wife in the car and walked into the Dean's office just in time to hear them say, "We sure have enjoyed meeting you, but we have to go because we have another meeting in 30 minutes."

So what is the point? The point is I have just wasted three minutes of your time and your life telling you a story which has absolutely no redeeming value. On top of that, consider this: when you tell people negative things (I had a flat tire, I missed my flight, I have a headache, etc.) here is how it is received:

- 88% of the people you tell don't care.
- 7% of the people you tell are glad it is happening to you!
- Only 5% of the people really care.

Here is my leadership challenge for you: go for one week and not tell a single soul a negative thing. If you have a sore throat don't tell anybody about it. If you have a headache, don't mention it. If you come out of your house tomorrow morning and you have a flat tire, fix the tire, go to work and do not tell anyone.

If you have had one of those tough days where nothing went right and everything went wrong, everyone is mad, frustrated and upset and your spouse or friend asks, "How was your day today?" I want you to say, "I had a good day, how was yours?" Yes, I want you to lie for a week! As leaders we have to monitor our conversation and make sure we are not wasting people's time on our "problem de jour."

We do need to talk about safety issues, customer service issues and seriously ill family members. It is the other things – "It is too hot, it is too cold, it is too wet, can you believe that employee did that, the memo that came out from corporate two months ago was ridiculous". As leaders these are the sorts of things that we need to raise ourselves above. One of the great things that separates man from animal is that we have a choice in our thought processes. You can look around your office, your department or your organization and you can make positive statements about them or negative statements about them. You have a choice. I challenge you to inspect the choices you are making.

Some people say we need a shoulder to lean on, someone to share the little negative things that come our way. I sincerely believe we do need a confidant to share things with, but we as mature adults do not need every shoulder we see from 8:00 in the morning until 12:00 at night. So here is what I want you to do. I want you to start this today, right now. Go for one week, do not tell a single soul a negative thing. One week from today, having saved up all this negative stuff, grab somebody you have never seen before, take them into an office, shut the door and say, "Sit here son, I am going to tell you a story you aren't going to believe". Just give it all to them. By the way, the world's record on this is 19 days...how long can you go?

Here are some questions to ponder:

1. Why are some people habitually negative? Are people born that way or is it learned behavior?
2. Vice versa – Why are some people positive and what is the cause of this behavior?
3. Can we turn negative people positive?
4. Do negative people by their very existence hurt productivity?
5. What is your score on a scale of 1-10, 1 being very negative and 10 being very positive?

What can you do to improve your score?

KN² means “keep the negative news”. I have KN² on labels that I give to participants in some of my seminars as a reminder of this. Please [click here](#) to download KN² and place it somewhere where you can see it each day – by your computer, bathroom mirror, or desktop.

P. S. 1. Nantucket is really beautiful, don't pass up a chance to see it.

P.S. 2. I met with the “Very Important People” two weeks later with great results!!

I encourage your response to these thoughts. farlgroup@aol.com

Have a great day!

Please forward this on or send us the e-mail addresses of co-workers, friends or family members who might enjoy a monthly leadership thought.

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