



Smartest Leaders are also Wise

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Back in my dating days I went out with a fellow who my family later named ‘Yucky Jim.’ I was initially attracted to him, in part, by his brilliance. He was one smart guy.

In time, I noticed the invitations to normal activities dropping off. Then, if I was attending an event, people would politely ask if ‘Jim’ was also coming. If he was, they’d sigh. This was peculiar behavior for my warm and welcoming friends, so I began observing interactions.

It was important to Jim (as with many leaders) to let *everyone* know how smart he was.

In fact, he had to comment on everything and had to be ‘right’ at all times to the point of being argumentative. Sadly, Jim was oblivious to how uncomfortable people had become, backing away from him and out of conversations.

Many leaders have this damaging insistence on being ‘right’ to the point of de-motivating individuals on their team, associates, even board members.

Think of the last time a team member approached you excited about his brilliant new idea. Were you curious and encouraging, thinking that they just may know something you don’t know? Or did you discard their idea because you are smarter than them?

Below are statements from ‘smart’ leaders who are far from wise, unaware of the damage they are creating, followed by ‘wise’ suggestions to replace or recover from their initial statements.

“I’ve already thought of that.” Perhaps you did, but your goal is not to show how smart you are, rather to inspire the individual before to come to you with a continual flow of new ideas. Try: *“Interesting, tell me more.”* You may just learn something new.

“We’ve tried that before.” Instead, consider opening up to the possibility of a new iteration: *“Fascinating twist on something we looked at previously. Will you send your thoughts on specifically how we might improve it this time around?”*

“We don’t have time for that. Have you lost your focus?” It could be that your employee can do their job, which is not as thought-intensive as yours *and* think of new ideas at the same time. Consider: *“Intriguing. Let’s set up a meeting to explore your idea after this deadline.”*

“You must not have been listening when we discussed this last week.” It could be that *you* didn’t do a thorough job in explaining the topic and this person missed the point. However, the discussion stimulated her new thoughts around the same topic. Rather than correct her, ask if she was at the meeting, what she heard and how this approach is different.

One of Central Oregon’s wisest leaders (and we have many), is Gary Fish, President at Deschutes Brewery. Fish has listed *hiring people who are smarter than he is* as one of his top ten keys to success. Fish not only hires smarter people, he listens to and encourages them.

The difference between being a 'smart' or 'wise' leader is in your level of confidence and how you treat those around you. While you may be the smartest person in the room, you'll accomplish more by being wise enough to respect and seek the wisdom in others.

Wise leaders are confident, positive and ask more questions than merely smart leaders who constantly feel that they have something to prove and oftentimes appear to be on edge.

Which are you?

Read all of Ann's Writing and Wisdom at: <http://gvasuccess.com/writing-and-wisdom.htm>

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