



## Minding the Gap - February 2017

A Faith and Work Publication

Welcome to *Minding the Gap*, a monthly thought about faith in the workplace!

### "When to Speak and When Not To"

A couple of Sundays ago, we sang a hymn with a verse which brought to mind the **place and significance of communication** at our work sites and beyond. These words were from the hymn "O God, My Faithful God":

*Keep me from saying words that later need recalling;  
Guard me, lest idle speech may from my lips be falling;  
But when within my place, I must and ought to speak,  
Then to my words give grace, lest I offend the weak.*

Singing this hymn refreshed my memory of my work years at Augsburg College and Reell Corporation. Clearly major portions of my working hours were spent around repairing miscommunication experiences, which resulted in fractured relationships. Very frequently the result was the organization suffered a loss of trust; a significant increase in expenses; a drop in service/product quality; and on-and-on.

All of life seems to be about **relationship**. Even chemical elements on the Atomic Chart are in relationship to one another. Every living creature in some manner seems to experience relationship. Christians believe the deepest and perhaps most complicated expression of relationship is between people. But central to all relationship is the **element of communication** - think about that.

For certain within the last 3-4 decades options for communicating have exploded. Many of these technologies have vastly improved our efficiency in communicating ideas or data - e-mail, texting, Twitter, Facebook, etc. However, when it comes to resolving issues in relationships; then **face-to-face communication** seems to me is vital. Now conflict is not always the issue. It could be the deepening of a relationship; the consoling of a person; the correcting of a child; the inspiring of an athletic team; etc. **but all** require face-to-face talking. And to catch your attention as to how complicated that might be, one study indicated the actual words represent only 7% of the complete communication process. While non-verbals (body position, eye contact, hand gestures, etc) make up 55% and tone of voice 38%. While words are very important and should be considered carefully, it is the non-verbals and voice tone which convince people of your caring and compassion. Although probably oversimplified, I believe Paul's words here are very appropriate: "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up."(I Cor.8:1).

Let me suggest the following practices as possibly helpful to communicating. Taking time to **notice** how the person appears - smiling, frowning, tears, clinched jaw or hand, slumped over, etc. **Understanding** - seek first to really, really understand what they're saying and how they're feeling. **Listening** - illustrated by the story about Paul Tournier (well known Swiss psychologist) who simply listened to a woman for an entire hour, responding only with non-verbal gestures. At the end of the session the woman hugged him saying, "Dr. Tournier you'll never know how much you've helped me!" And, **affirming**, as the maid in the movie "The Help" said to the little girl: "You is kind, you is smart, you is important!" Amen sister!

Blessings in your 2017 world of work.

- Jim Grubs

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