

LIVE LIFE INTENTIONALLY

Consider Your Impact

YEARS AGO, I worked with one of the most easy-going executives I've ever met. He had a friendly hello for everyone, never seemed to have mood swings and was a pleasure to be around. You couldn't help but smile hearing his booming laugh down the hall. When he walked into a meeting, the energy would surge.

Then one day, he showed up grouchy. I mean, really grouchy. I asked if he was okay, and received a short, snappish, "Yes, fine." Several other people asked a similar question and got the same terse response. None of his trademark laughter and smiles, nothing. Just, "Fine," with an unsaid, "Now go away."

Before long, worried chatter consumed the staff. Folks popped in and out of offices and cubicles asking, "What's going on? What's wrong with Bob?" Everyone was convinced something bad had happened, or was about to happen.

Turns out, he was telling the truth. There really was nothing wrong. He was just having a bad day.

CAN YOU JUST HAVE A BAD DAY?

It happens all the time: you've caused a reaction that's a complete surprise to you. Sometimes you know it immediately, but just as often you might not even realize what's happened.

In Bob's case, he didn't learn until the next day that he'd sent a wave of anxiety sweeping through the office. He was shocked; it was certainly not his intention to upset anyone. In his mind, his bad day was simply *his* bad day.

But of course, it doesn't work like that.

Your words, your actions, even the things you *don't* say or do, have an effect on everyone around you. It's true in your professional world, in your personal relationships, and in your interactions with people you don't even know - the checker at

the grocery store or the driver you just let into your lane. If you're alive, you're having an impact.

SENDING THE MESSAGE

Whether you're giving good news, communicating anger, or asking a seemingly insignificant question, you send a message. The goal is to get really good at noticing if it's the message you intended. It takes a little practice, and the easiest way to build your skill is to keep two simple questions in mind:

- What's my intention right now?
- What impact did I just have?

Had Bob been paying attention during his grouchy day, he would have noticed something was amiss by the simple number of times he was asked if anything was wrong. "Just woke up on the wrong side of the bed, sorry folks, didn't mean to take it out on you," would have settled things right down and prevented a day of lost productivity as everyone worried. Instead, he spent the entire next day righting the wrong interpretation of his unusual behavior, not to mention he felt *terrible* for causing so much angst.

Once you put your antennae up, the clues are everywhere, sometimes subtle and often obvious. You'll find them in others' words, in their body language and facial expressions and in unexpected reactions. Seeing resistance when you thought you were sharing good news? Anger when it seemed benign to you? Or just bizarre behavior and for the life of you, you cannot figure out what you did? All are symptoms of an unintended impact.

But unlike Bob, you now have the necessary information to quickly deal with it. More often than not, just a few words will do the trick. And that's the kind of awareness that will help you live your day the way you want to live your life. |

