



Sherpa Strength: The Newsletter of Executive Coaching

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Truth in Words

By Brenda Corbett, Sherpa Guide author

It's nice to know what's really going on. It's nice to know the truth. One of the most important commitments we make is the solemn oath: "The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

When we decide our disputes in a court of law, we are making important decisions. We have all agreed what kind of truth it takes to do that: All the truth, and nothing else. When you make decisions that affect your career, do you set the same high standards? When you build working relationships, do you get truth, all of it, and nothing but?

One important component of success is putting truth into the words the words we say. I did a personal research project the other day. I asked three people: "Isn't it a nice day?" The first one answered "No. Those clouds will move in. With my luck, we will get rain today." The second told me: "Oh my goodness. I see the blue peeking out. I think it will be a glorious day." The third person said: "I have no idea. I have a big meeting today. I haven't looked outside."

All of them are telling the truth. Truth can be different for each person. If each person can have their own 'truth', what is true in general terms? Tough question.



Delivering truth

To get to where you want to go, truth must be a constant companion, something you work on, something you practice. If you are going to deliver truth, you'll have to give it time. Give up the desire to cut corners, no matter how rushed you may feel. To deliver truth, take time to know when people clearly understand what you are saying. Make sure they understand your truth.

Delivering truth is all about the words you say. Think of your journey as a highway, and your communication as a 'word highway'.

Truth in Words, continued

The perfect journey: There are times when you are driving on the word highway and everything is working. You are confident. You are at peace, good music playing on the radio, relaxed, not rushing and you know exactly where you are going and know exactly what you are saying. Your communication is perfect. But sometimes.....that is not the case...

Driving too fast: Speeding can be dangerous. On the 'word highway', speeding means talking and moving faster than the conversations we are having. Ever had a speeding ticket on the 'word highway', a penalty for talking too fast or using too many words? Perhaps you talked so fast because you were so busy. Multitasking can cause you to talk too quickly.

Dana is an effective CEO. She knows what she is doing and has a lot of experience. Her biggest weakness? Dana talks too much. She says she has an open door policy, but she wonders why more of her department heads don't stop by to talk. People actually go out of their way to avoid Dana.

When Dana talks too much, the truth gets lost. Things get said to the wrong people. Things don't get heard because people don't know when to listen. When Dana learns how to slow down, her team learns when to listen. They even stop avoiding her.

Losing control: Ever lost control of your vehicle on the 'word highway'? We all have accidents. Do you choose your words carefully, or do you get into trouble? Ever said anything you regret? You know you can't take back words. When you lose control of your dialogue, you bury the truth.

Back roads and detours: Driving on your 'word highway', do you take people down country roads, places they don't want to travel? Sometimes the main road is difficult for you, full of potholes. If you want to find truth, you'll stay on the main road and avoid the back streets.

Making it real: Do your words match your actions? There's another pothole. Only make the commitments you can keep. Then you are delivering the truth. When you worry about looking good, you usually won't look good.

Driving Tips:

Don't drive too far. Keep your words to a minimum. Don't say anything unless it improves upon the silence.

Don't drive too fast. Let people catch up with you by asking questions. You can tell whether a person is smart by their answers. You know a person is wise by their questions.

Drive under control. Successful communication doesn't depend on how well we say things. Truth comes when we are clearly understood. Make your highway a two-way street. When you talk, you repeat what you already know. When you listen, you can learn.

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