

### “YOU DON'T HAVE TO YELL TO MAKE YOUR POINT



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“You don’t have to yell to make your point,” Mom used to say when someone in the family “lost it” and started screaming and yelling in an attempt to be heard. Unfortunately, senior management in some organizations haven’t gotten the word that yelling and screaming at each other and their subordinates is not an effective way to communicate with one another, or to run a business.

A professional recently joined the senior management team of a well-known service company. During the recruitment process, he did a lot of research on the company’s history, the key players, and the financial performance of the business. Everything looked good, and he accepted the well-paid job.

In his second week on the job, he was called into an executive leadership meeting with the president and all of his peers - eight vice presidents of the organization. Within minutes the president started screaming at two of the VP’s for what he perceived to be mistakes or errors in judgment. The yelling was accentuated by fist pounding on the table. One VP withdrew and acquiesced; the other chose to scream back at the president.

Stunned by the behavior of his boss and peers, the newly hired executive sat silently and observed. No one else in the group spoke up. Was this just a bad day, or was this the way the executive team communicated with each other and ran the business? Some further personal observations and off-line employee discussions validated that the latter was the case.

“That’s been the way they have dealt with one another for years. I don’t think they are about to change now.” one manager shared. “We’ve lost several new executives who wouldn’t put up with it. I hope that you can hang in there and stay with us, because we really could use someone like you to set an example of how things should be.”

When screaming or other aggressive behaviors become the hallmark of a culture, there is little that any one individual can do to overcome it or change it. Like seems to attract like. Those who have a similar style of relating will be drawn into the organization and tend to stay. Others, who value their job security more than their integrity or peace of mind, will merely put in their time in and live with it.

Human Resources may be aware of the negative impact that these styles have on the organization, knowing how productivity and morale are affected. They also know that negative leadership behaviors contribute to high turnover, which is costly to the company. And so, they may attempt to recruit new blood, especially at the leadership level, who might serve as positive role models.

Unfortunately, people who act and react by screaming, yelling, or intimidating don’t see themselves as the problem, particularly if they have reached the highest levels of the organization where they feel protected. As a result, they are likely to drive away those who could infuse some healthier ways of communicating into the organization.

A company's culture is created from the top down. If the senior leadership recognizes the negative impact that their behavior is having on the organization, one way they can seek assistance is through executive coaching. If the president is the source, however, and unwilling to change, then the organization will not have a genuine opportunity to be "re-invented" until he/she is removed from the position or retires.