

STEPPING UP TO YOUR OWN TRUTH

THE CONSEQUENCE OF SAYING THE WRONG THING

Ted Rogers Leadership Centre

You have been in your current role as manager of housekeeping in a busy downtown Toronto hotel for two and a half years. In the six years you have worked for the property, you have received hands-on leadership experience in all rooms operations. In each role, you have received exceptional performance reviews. You are also just a month away from completing the thesis for your MBA, which you have been doing on-line with Athabasca University over the last five years. Thinking that you should capitalize on your success, you have recently applied for a vacancy to be a rooms division director and member of the Executive Committee at one of the chain's west coast properties. The general manager and the rooms director at your current property have said they will support your application and are helping you prepare for the first round of interviews next week. You are excited about the prospect of branching out. While the deadlines for completing your MBA, prepping for the interviews, and questions from your partner about what the move will mean for you as a couple are a challenge, you believe you have everything well in hand. After all, you are used to stress.

As you arrive at work on Monday, set to begin the morning meeting with the housekeeping staff, you realize your long weekend of study and seemingly endless, circular arguments with your partner have taken their toll. You are also a little jittery from all the coffee you have consumed. During the meeting you remind the housekeepers again about the importance of not overloading their carts with more supplies than are needed as this leaves others short when the hotel is full. Your announcement causes two groups of housekeepers, the Dominicans and the Jamaicans, to burst out, each accusing the other of sabotage and hoarding. You have heard this inter-island bickering all too often, and you blow up, saying things that you later admit were regrettable as they make you sound like a racist.

The union rep for the housekeepers reports your inappropriate outburst to HR and an investigation is launched. At a later meeting, attended by the GM, your direct boss, HR, and the union rep, you are told that you need to apologize for your outburst. How do you do this in a way that really makes others understand that you are not a racist?

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The Twist

Your boss takes you aside and tells you that, given the stress you are obviously under, it might be best to withdraw your application to the west coast and apply at a time when you feel more in control. Nonetheless, you still want to advance your career and you think you might be able to “make lemons out of lemonade” by developing a plan that will work to improve the working environment and heal the cultural rifts in your department once and for all. Such a plan will help to position you as a real leader, and help to overcome your gaff. You need to decide what such a step-by-step plan looks like.

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