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## Respect in the workplace

**W**hen an organization sets out to achieve its mission-vision, it goes through a process that requires a lot of interaction among its stakeholders. They discuss how to achieve organizational goals, review alternative approaches, and decide on strategic thrusts as well as tactical approaches. This process is dynamic and not easy to make. It often includes contentious discussions among stakeholders on the choice of the right path. What will spell ultimate success is when the organizational players are able to conduct themselves professionally and with respect as the issues are confronted in various settings of the workplace.

Let's illustrate this dynamic using a recent controversy in the NBA, the premiere professional basketball league in America. Recently, a very public figure and vocal personality criticized in media the coach of the team where his son is a prized rookie. He said the Los Angeles Lakers players, including his son, are no longer willing to put in effort for their coach, Luke Walton.

Consequently, a lot of coaches reacted almost vehemently to this very public opinion covered by media. The coaches even wondered aloud why said personality was being afforded the me-

dia space. The revered Greg Popovich, coach of NBA's multiple champion San Antonio's Spurs, reacted to this controversial comment eloquently. What he had to say as quoted by an ESPN writer is full of valuable lessons.

"Whenever anyone says anything about another individual or about the quality of another individual, or what they're doing, I think the first thing to look at is the substance and gravitas of the source that speaks. Just stopping at that point would tell you that you don't need to listen on go any further. It's just another fan in the peanut gallery with an opinion, which is meaningless."

He goes on to talk about how Luke Walton has been schooled in the game and why he believes he inherently understands the game better than anybody else does. Popovich concludes thus.

"So he's very more than ready to handle this situation. But it's a situation that's will take time. It's a process. And it certainly does not need outside chatter from people who don't have a clue and haven't gotten over themselves."

While the meaningless criticism comes from a technical outsider, it doesn't reflect on good behavior, sets bad example and is reckless. Even if the comment is a valid observation, for

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+ VALUES

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argument's sake, it is a pronouncement that sets the wrong message to his own son and is, as some coaches call it, a rational nonsense. This personality may be a known figure, but does he have the right to openly criticize the coach for whom the son plays and to jeopardize that coach-player relationship by putting words in his own son's mouth? Isn't it demonstrative of utter disrespect for the team that employs his son? Is there a better way to frame a critique for it to be constructive especially since the source has relations within the team?

One of the tenets of professionalism in the workplace is treating other people with respect. An individual who shows consideration and respect for others demonstrates a commitment to professionalism. Professionalism has to do with how to conduct oneself in an appropriate tone while communicating with others. Treating others with respect allows the organization to work smoothly and avoid or at the very least reduce conflicts. Trust in the organization can be lost with one stupid or inconsiderate action.

A business environment in which the people act and operate professionally is more conducive for success. Maintaining a professional conduct means establishing respect for author-

ity figures, clients and co-workers. It means adherence to policies set, and questioning it in the right venue. Workers who respect each other's boundaries will be able to resolve conflicts efficiently. It will also allow the surfacing of diverse perspectives and opinions that lead to better business solutions because the professionalism of the staff will lead to mature conflict resolution and management of differences. Keeping a healthy respect for what is considered appropriate and being mindful of boundaries and limits help avoid conflicts and misunderstandings.

Professionalism goes beyond being good at what you do. It does not necessarily preclude critiques and objections. It is about agreeing to disagree but also fully supporting the eventual decisions made. It's not just what you know but how you behave and how you interact with others. What gives meaning to workplace professionalism is behavior. And it all starts with respect for the others.

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