



turning managers into leaders

Merge's Monthly Mega Minute – July 2005

Welcome to **Merge's Monthly Mega-Minute** - a bite-sized, yet substantial and practical, nugget of information that you can use immediately to enhance your professional and personal success.

This issue of Merge's Monthly Mega-Minute may be **FREELY** distributed to friends, colleagues, and discussion groups, as long as the entire issue is included. You may use excerpts of it in your print, electronic, or other publications, as long as the following byline is also included:

Merge Gupta-Sunderji helps turn managers into leaders. Through engaging keynotes and facilitated workshops, she gives people specific and practical tools to achieve leadership and communication success. Contact her at www.mergespeaks.com or 403-605-4756

Prune your trees carefully, but don't cut them down

Our friends recently undertook a major house renovation. I happened to be there on the day when, as part of the reconstruction, a work crew cut down a young walnut tree in the front yard. I overheard our friends' young daughter proudly say, "Mummy, we learned in school that if you prune trees they grow bigger and stronger. Is that what will happen to this tree?" Her mother replied, "Honey, we're not pruning the tree, we're cutting it down." The youngster appeared to carefully consider the answer for a few moments, and then she said: "But, Mummy, if you cut it down, then how will you ever know how big it can grow?"

Sometimes, the most insightful leadership lessons come from the mouths of babes. This little girl had grasped something that experienced leaders already know. Namely, that pruning trees (or people) is a gentle art that takes finesse but results in a better and stronger tree. However, if you cut too much or too deep, the tree (or person) will fall, and then you will never know how big it can grow. As leaders, you are charged with offering constructive and useful feedback to your people, pruning, if you will. Good pruning leads to better and stronger employees. Yet, if your words and actions are said in haste or without careful thought, then you can cut too deep and the tree will come down. When that happens, you will never know how big the tree can grow, because your words and actions will limit that person's ability to reach his or her full potential.

Leaders, when you want to offer feedback to your employees, take the time to think through what you want to say and choose your words carefully. With good pruning, your people will develop and strengthen, and perhaps exceed even your initial expectations.