



turning managers into leaders

Merge's Monthly Mega Minute – October 2007

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.

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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

A defining moment in the life of an Arizona state trooper

He is twenty-two years old, a rookie state trooper with the Arizona Highway Patrol. Alone much of the time with backup not immediately available, he has learned to rely on his instincts and courage in order to deal with the diverse situations he faces as he patrols unending miles in the hot Arizona desert. He notices a vehicle seemingly abandoned on a remote road, several miles from the Interstate. As he gets closer, he realizes that there is a lone occupant in the driver's seat. There is no other car for miles, and his intense Academy training kicks in.

Park your car as if you are approaching a felon – so that the car is a barrier between you and the criminal. Motion the driver to step out of the car and approach you.

The driver signals back, but stays where he is.

Get on the loudspeaker and repeat your request. "Get out of the vehicle and put your hands on the hood where I can see them."

The driver signals again but stays immobile. He shouts something, but the trooper cannot make out the words.

Scan the perp's vehicle and assess his behaviour.

There are metal tubes in the back seat that look suspiciously like the barrel of a shotgun, and the guy looks frantic and stressed.



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Repeat once again. "Get out of the vehicle and put your hands on the hood. If you do not comply, I will shoot."

The driver yells back, getting increasingly agitated. The trooper realizes that this is a potentially dangerous situation.

Engage your weapon, keep it pointed at the offender, and approach while using your car as a shield. Continue to repeat your warning that if the perpetrator does not obey, you will shoot. Be prepared to fire if the felon reaches for his gun.

The driver is overwrought and shouts crazily as the trooper approaches, but they are still not close enough for the trooper to understand what he is saying. As the trooper slowly nears the vehicle, the criminal reaches into the back seat. The trooper's hairs on the back of his neck stand up and his fingers tighten around the trigger. In that split second before he presses down, he finally hears what the driver of the vehicle is shouting. "Please don't shoot me. I can't move, I don't have any legs!" The trooper's eyes cloud with unshed tears and his hand falls to his side; in that moment he realizes how close he came to making a decision with devastating consequences. The metal tubes he saw in the back seat are parts of a wheelchair. The car had broken down several hours ago, and the driver had been hopeful that another motorist would eventually come by.

Yes, I know, my heart stopped too the first time I heard this story! This is a true account told to me by one of my participants at a recent leadership seminar. Before he joined the financial services industry, he was a state trooper for many years. As he recounted this personal incident from his past, I could tell that it was a lesson he had carried with him for countless years. The lesson was profound. Sometimes it's very easy to fall back on what we know and what we have always done (or not done) as we make decisions. Yet, just as often, willing to listen and open our minds to new information is what will lead to future success. In a split second, this trooper went from a situation where his life was in danger to one where he could have caused untold tragedy. In reality though, the situation did not change, all that changed was the trooper's knowledge of the circumstances; information he obtained by listening before acting. And this knowledge dramatically changed his final outcome.

How many times have you reacted and pulled the trigger based on your past knowledge and experiences, only to end up with an unsatisfactory result? Take the time to listen with an open mind, and you too might obtain the additional knowledge you need to dramatically and positively change your final outcome.