



turning managers into leaders

Merge's Monthly Mega Minute – October 2009

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Merge Gupta-Sunderji turns 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

Three birds and a squirrel

Early one morning, I was walking through an empty parking lot when I observed a seagull gracefully swoop down towards a small paper bag lying upon the asphalt. No doubt, the seagull hoped to find some morsel of food within the bag. It must have been right, because moments later, a magpie plunged down and tried to snatch the bag away from the seagull. A crow arrived in the next instant and attempted to get its share of the prize. Within minutes, the three birds were battling one another in the quest for whatever unknown gift lay within the paper bag. So caught up were they in their conflict that they failed to notice the squirrel. The little bushy brown-tailed creature watched them from about 10 feet away. As the three birds skirmished with one another, he began to cautiously make his way forward. With a quick burst of energy, he dashed forward, grabbed the bag, and made off towards the trees that skirted the edge of the parking lot. At the last moment, the seagull noticed the squirrel and tried to switch its attention towards rescuing the treasure. But the magpie and the crow weren't having any of it; they continued to wage war with the seagull and with each other. By the time they all realized that the subject of their fracas was no longer, the squirrel was long gone, probably dusting off crumbs and chuckling at his good fortune.

Do similar scenarios ever occur in your workplace? Have you ever clashed with another manager or co-worker, and gotten so caught up in the battle that you forgot what you were fighting for in the first place? In the day-to-day of sometimes dysfunctional working relationships, it's easy to lose sight of the desired end-goal and get distracted by the skirmishes on your journey to the finish line. It's far too easy to become the seagull, the magpie, or the crow. And when that happens, you leave a wide-open opportunity for a squirrel to step in and steal the prize from right under your nose. Confrontations along the way to your desired outcome are sometimes unavoidable; yet if you can keep your eye on the ultimate goal while taking measured steps to resolve the conflict, then you will be much more likely to achieve eventual and definitive success.