

Hello. This is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. As always, thanks for tuning in. Don't forget about our Boot Camp class Echo, February 18, 2021, for your high-potential rising leaders in your companies. Great opportunity to get them some education on the business of the construction business. We can't teach them how to estimate and project manage and file claims and all that kind of stuff, what we can teach them is construction business finance and business development and leadership and strategic planning and things like that, the things that it takes to run a construction company at the 30,000-foot level. That's what Boot Camp is all about.

All right. This week, I want to talk about thinking before you respond. This actually comes from one of our facilitators, John Stump, who is just a gifted consultant. We're so blessed to have him. Now, why is this important? Why do I even bring this up? I mean, think before you respond, that sounds so elementary. Well, we have countless opportunities every day, week, month to interact with other people, and those interactions can either be neutral or they can be a difference maker on the positive side, or they can be a difference maker on the negative side. Personally speaking, all too many times I may be caught up in a moment, not paying attention, not being engaged with people and behave in an irritated way or something.

What John Stump saw, he was going to a client's site and he was at the airport to come home. An Air Force officer was in the line and he very politely walked up to a lady and said, "Are you in line?" He didn't want to break in the line. She rounded on him, and then with an incredulous look on her face, "I'm not blocking you. Why are you asking me?" She just flew hot for no real reason. The Air Force officer, to his credit, said, "Thank you," and he moved on and got in his place in line.

Well, John observed that and just thought, that situation, the Air Force officer was really polite. That could have been just a really nice, warm moment of human courtesy and it turned into an ugly exchange, witnessed by lots of people. You think about how many times that happens. That's happened to me, it's happened to you, think about that.

Dennis and I took some training about 20 years ago from a psychotherapist named Jean McLendon, who's terrific. She talked about the ingredients in any communication, any human interaction, there are five particular ingredients. There's the message, the message we receive through our five senses. We heard, "Are you in line?" We hear that, but we also see body language and other things. We observe things through our five senses and then it goes into our brain.

By the way, all of this happens in nanoseconds. Our brains are amazing computers, all this happens in a split second. There's the message, there is the meaning that we derive from the message, what we hear, but also, it's filtered through our memories and our view of who we are as people. Then our feelings come up about the message. Sometimes they're neutral, sometimes you may feel angry, sometimes you may feel happy at whatever message you receive.

Then Jean had this incredible insight. After we have a feeling about that meaning, then we have feelings about our feelings. "Oh, I shouldn't feel that way." It really is an amazing insight. That piece of it, the feelings about our feelings, is where we get caught up in our own psychological drama. But if we know it's there, then we can adapt and react in a positive way.

Then finally, the fifth ingredient is your response. The response is what other people see. When the lady became angry and flew hot, that's what other people saw, but there was a message, there was a meaning, there was a feeling, there was a feeling about a feeling, and finally, what the Air Force officer got was the response.

Now, Stephen Covey says it, Jean McLendon says it. We have a choice, and it really is a choice. The way Stephen Covey says it is exercise integrity in the moment of choice. That moment of choice is not a moment, it's a split second. It's a tiny little second. That's what John Stump recommends, think before you respond. That's when you have a choice that you can make about how you're going to respond. This Air Force officer exercised integrity, and he remained calm and polite and took what could have been a negative interaction and just erased it. He exercised integrity in the moment of choice.

Think about that, think about that as it being a leader in your company. You have that choice, I have that choice, we all have that choice. If we allow that nanosecond to become, "I think I heard something negative, I'm going to blow up," we're not necessarily exercising integrity. Maybe you need to blow up from time to time, but that's usually not the case. Leaders in construction companies need to listen and they need to make that choice with integrity when they have the opportunity. It'll make your interactions warmer and more meaningful in your company.

I'd like to hear your comments and thoughts about thinking before you respond. This is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thank you.