

# Turbo Leadership Systems™

## The **TURBO** **Charger**

Phone: (503) 625-1867 • Fax: (503) 625-2699 • email: [admin@turbols.com](mailto:admin@turbols.com)

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To our clients and friends

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### Blind and Blindest



Larry W. Dennis, Sr.  
President,  
Turbo Leadership  
Systems©

*"Sarcasm is  
the lowest  
form of wit"*

**D**enis, operating supervisor for a paper mill in northern Ontario, Canada, told Session 5B of the Leadership Development Lab:

"In August 2006, I returned to work after a long, painful, debilitating eye illness. This illness resulted in me losing 100% of my vision in one eye and 50% of my vision in the other eye. I had lost 6 weeks of work. My boss approached me on the morning of my first day back and proceeded to candidly ask me, 'How did you enjoy your little "vacation"?' My immediate reaction was one of utter rage at his audacity. My disgusted reply to his question was, 'If you think going blind in one eye and losing 50% of your vision in the other eye is a vacation, wholly you're an 'idiot'. I turned around, left the room and went straight to my office. From that day forward, our working relationship has been strained as I personally lost a lot of respect for my 'boss'.

"The lesson I learned from this experience is that there is no place for sarcasm in the workplace. What one person may think of as being amusing could be extremely personal and hurtful to another. "The action I call you to take is to think twice before saying something you might regret or worse, permanently hurt a working relationship with a peer or subordinate.

"The benefit you will gain by avoiding the use of sarcastic comments as a means of communication will be a more motivated

and better working relationship with your employees and peers."

According to Wikipedia, "Sarcasm is a form of irony that is bitter or cutting, being intended to taunt its target. It comes from the ancient Greek sarkasmos meaning 'to tear flesh'. Oscar Wilde, the great Irish playwright, poet and author of numerous short stories and one novel, also knows for his biting wit, declared that sarcasm is the lowest form of wit."

Hostile, critical comments may be expressed in an ironic way such as saying "don't work too hard" to a lazy worker. The use of irony introduces an element of humor which may make the criticism seem more polite and less aggressive, but understanding the subtlety of this usage requires second-order interpretation of the speaker's intentions.

Often we use sarcasm to avoid being direct, or try and appear clever in an attempt to be funny and humorous. Frankly it is a lazy way to interact with others. You are trying to influence behavior, provide a critique without exercising the courage required to be direct, avoiding the courageousness required in direct confrontational communication. Stop talking about the things that can go unsaid and exercise the courage to say with clear, direct language the things that need to be said. Remember, your coaching and corrective feedback must always be aimed at behaviors, not attitudes. Just keep your opinions to yourself.

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