

Turbo Leadership Systems™

The **TURBO** **Charger**

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To our clients and friends

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Tender Learning



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*Winners accept
a helping hand*

John, head machine tender for a paper mill in northern Ontario, Canada, told Session 7B of the Leadership Development Lab:

“Our Paper Machine #4 backtender was having difficulty putting sheets on the reel. The machine tender just happened to be there at the time and stepped forward to make a suggestion, which the backtender took offense to. He snapped back at the machine tender and that’s when I intervened. I told the machine tender to let the backtender do his job his way and that we would talk later after he had calmed down.

A short time later, I sat down with the backtender and explained that the machine tender was only trying to help him. He said, ‘Nobody is going to tell me how to do my job. I know my job.’ I bit my tongue, kept my cool, and said, ‘You have more senior, wellexperienced coworkers who are willing to help you. They are not trying to tell you how to do your job; they only want to help you. By listening to these tips, ideas and suggestions, you could gain more experience and possibly different methods that could make your job easier. I’m not saying that your way is wrong; there is just always room for improvement in any job. I’m asking you to just listen to what others have to say if they are willing to try to help you.’ He agreed and even tried the suggestion the machine tender had given him, which did help.

“The lesson I learned from this experi-

ence is that when tempers start to flare, I can intervene and diffuse the situation, and then follow-up with the individuals involved after they have had a chance to cool down. Then I can sit down, listen, and explain the situation calmly.

The action I call you to take is to be courageous, take the initiative to diffuse a situation that could really blow up and then follow up – get to the root of the situation so it won’t happen again. The benefit you will gain by diffusing a potentially bad situation is you will get associates to listen and work as a team. Cooler heads will prevail.”

John had many options when he witnessed this reactive interchange between the backtender and machine tender. I am sorry to say that our Cultural Benchmark Survey results show that much of the time middle management just walks by these kinds of events – “Let them work it out”. We also hear that sometimes middle management’s interaction is just as bad or worse than the response of the machine tender in this story.

The path to continuous improvement is not installing a better machine or a new computer. These capital investments only provide a one-time improvement. The path to continuous improvement is paved with the courageous professional coaching John demonstrated in the above story.

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