

# All knowledge is useless unless applied

By Grace Daly



Grace Daly is the founding host of ShopTalk360.com, the industry podcast show. With more than 20 years directing design, construction and facilities for national retail brands, Daly's current role as interviewer, author and business coach celebrates the leaders in our industry she fondly refers to as her family. Please feel free to reach out to her at [Grace@GraceDaly.com](mailto:Grace@GraceDaly.com)

**SHOPTALK** 360<sup>®</sup>

During my career in construction and facilities many years ago, I'll never forget one incident that clearly described this. I was transitioning to leave a brand chain and my team was to report to another director. During office desks moves, two of my team members came to me, excited to propose sitting next to each other. One had expertise in the HVAC trade, while the other excelled in presentation skills. So the thought was that they would both have desks next to each other to cross train and share their innate skills with the other.

Well, that sounded like a no brainer to me. This request was simple – they were not asking for raises, title changes, or responsibility or territory changes. They just wanted to change their seating so that they could learn from each other. I agreed with them, and was thrilled for their continued desire to learn and grow.

Later on that afternoon, I relayed this to their future supervisor. He looked at me plainly, reiterated the how and why for this proposed seating arrangement, and then with the most smug look on his face gave me a flat out no. "It's not happening," he said. When I asked why, he said it because he said so. There was no good business reason to deny this request – he was just flexing his muscles.

With his director's title, MBA and all the industry certifications he had hanging on his wall, he chose to let his ego rule. His decision created an uninspiring work environment that eventually chased out many of the long-term employees.

In the past decade, there has been a shift and focus on leadership approaches that affect all industries. Emotional intelligence has been the buzzword on blogs, editorials, books and talk shows. Emotional intelligence, the skill in perceiving, understanding, and managing emotions and feelings, is recognized as a vital leadership trait, just as important as the education and experience of an individual.

With this style of leadership that promotes compassion and inspiration comes the push and pull of whether or not emotional intelligence can be learned. And, if so, my question is how many of these individuals choose to apply this knowledge into everyday practice?

During my career in construction and facilities many years ago, I'll never forget one incident that clearly described this. I was transitioning to leave a brand chain and my team was to report to another director.

During office desks moves, two of my team mem-

bers came to me, excited to propose sitting next to each other. One had expertise in the HVAC trade, while the other excelled in presentation skills. So the thought was that they would both have desks next to each other to cross train and share their innate skills with the other.

Well, that sounded like a no brainer to me. This request was simple – they were not asking for raises, title changes, or responsibility or territory changes. They just wanted to change their seating so that they could learn from each other. I agreed with them, and was thrilled for their continued desire to learn and grow.

Later on that afternoon, I relayed this to their future supervisor. He looked at me plainly, reiterated the how and why for this proposed seating arrangement, and then with the most smug look on his face gave me a flat out no. "It's not happening," he said. When I asked why, he said it because he said so. There was no good business reason to deny this request – he was just flexing his muscles.

With his director's title, MBA and all the industry certifications he had hanging on his wall, he chose to let his ego rule. His decision created an uninspiring work environment that eventually chased out many of the long-term employees.

So, did he have low emotional intelligence, or had he chose not to use it? And if one does have emotional intelligence and chooses not to use it, does that mean he really doesn't possess that quality?

I guess to this day I'll never know, but I learned a very important lesson. A person's intentions will always be revealed in his actions.

The bottom line is emotional intelligence may be present, learned or acquired. You can go to webinars for it and earn a certification, but ultimately, it has to be chosen to be practiced and applied daily.

The fact remains that at the end of the day people who have "power" over other people to make decisions that affect their paychecks, their livelihoods and yes, even which desks they are allowed to sit in – all boils down to the individual's intentions. And intentions are always derived from whether they're operating from an ego or non-ego domain. It dawned on me why this "leader" was not well liked or well received in the industry. He was a jerk, and I think he actually enjoyed having that reputation.

Similar to what is said about money, it is not the root of all evil. Money only magnifies the type of person you are.

If the person is a jerk – money allows him or her to be a bigger jerk. If the person is kind, money allows him or her to be kinder; more generous. I find the responsibility of a leader to be the same.



**The responsibility or "power" that one possesses as a leader only magnifies that person. Emotional intelligence, whether intrinsic or learned, still has to be applied in order to be effective.**