



LEADERSHIP insights

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[March 11 – Motivational Interviewing](#) *VIRTUAL ONLY!*

[March 30 – At the Heart of the Matter: Engaging Your Workforce](#)
VIRTUAL ONLY!

[April 22 – Connecting the Dots through Emotional Intelligence \(4-hour\)](#) *VIRTUAL ONLY!*

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Intent to Deliver



Not contraband; this newsletter. On the afternoon of Wednesday, January 6th, 2021, when I had set aside time to write this month's piece, it became one of those etched-out moments in life, "Where were you when riots broke out and the nation's capital was overtaken?" It was impossible to turn away from the news to concentrate on writing. Yet as I watched and listened in horror as the day unfolded, at every turn there was a leadership tenet to be examined: integrity, trust, stewardship, decisiveness, communication, responsibility, the list goes on and on.

Fortunately, my deadline could be extended. I was derailed, but I still must write this. I agreed to it, am getting paid for it, and that led to my topic: the difference between good intentions and actually delivering on them.

Stephen M. R. Covey wrote, "*We judge ourselves by our intentions; others judge us by our actions.*" As a leader, in the end we must show results, not just talk. If you are "fixin' to" do something, it only counts if you follow through.

The long view matters.

Look back over your leadership experience. When did you deliver even when it would have been easier to quit? Where have your good intentions met perfectionism, procrastination, or lack of clarity about the target, keeping you from the final delivery? What impact did that have on others? **Consider these examples and scenarios for reflection and tips:**

----> I will get to the bottom of this.

But then we never actually do. Other priorities arise and we don't have a systematic way to investigate a root cause so we just apply the quickest solution. This shows action, but it is not the action that solves the underlying problem which can lead to unintended consequences. Don't mistake *any* action for delivering. Alternatively, we may just hope that the problem will go away on its own. Sometimes it does; more often the hope method sends the message to our team that we are not holding ourselves accountable and we lose credibility.

----> Next time.

We all have commitments that fall to the wayside. If it happens once, most of us forgive pretty quickly. Twice, and it leaves some doubt. Three times, it's a pattern and our reliability is really damaged. Can you clean up when you are truly deferring to next time vs just kicking a problem to a fictional future? Are there certain situations where this happens more often? What is it about those circumstances that gets in the

way of your decisive commitment? If you do have to push to the future, communicate new deadlines and progress steps to retain-or regain-the trust of people.

----> What gets followed up on gets done.

This is why I love having an accountability partner: we are moved to action when we know someone will check up on us. If your manager is too hands off to do this, ask a peer to partner with you by reviewing your commitments and checking in with you at agreed upon intervals.

----> I didn't mean it in a racist/sexist/demeaning/etc. way.

In a different twist, we get a result but it is not what we intended. We want to be exonerated because we didn't mean to harm. But the harm happened, as it does with unexamined discriminatory language. We want others to assume our good intent, but when the delivery results in pain for them, take responsibility graciously for your result and learn.

----> High impact delivery items rise to the top of a competing pile.

A day of work can be full of good intentions, but when you are trying to earn a reputation as a leader who follows through reliably, decide what actions will have the most meaningful impact. Spend your energy on those things.

----> Have a clear yes or no.

Vague yes's leave people disappointed when they believed you said yes, but you meant "maybe." My kind mama rarely said yes or no. She'd say, "We'll see," wanting to protect us from disappointment. But in leading, sometimes you have to be decisive and trust that adults will be able to handle it if something outside your control interferes.

----> Make conscious promises.

Over-promising often reflects a discomfort with setting boundaries. This backfires on you and your team. You take on more than you can reasonably do and resentment builds. Your team loses trust in your yes and respect for you. Work on establishing boundaries.

----> Setting an intention does have value.

For example, "My intention today is to seek out the ideas of my team." This kind of intention guides your actions (asking questions, listening, etc.) so that at the end of the day you can look back and see that you did follow through.