

## Life and Business Leadership Insight Oct-Nov 2001

### Did I say that?

Recently whilst watching one of my sons play in a local basketball competition, a young mother came up and sat beside me with her young family. One child, a small boy must have been about four years old and his sister approximately nine.

It quickly became apparent that the young mother was fighting a losing battle trying to keep the youngest child sitting quietly on the sidelines. The nine-year-old seemed to be reasonably interested in the game but the youngster wasn't the slightest bit interested.

After several threats and physical intimidation the lady dragged the boy up on to the seat next to me and warned the child that unless he was quiet "the man sitting next to you will give you a smack"!

I turned to face the child incredulous at what I had just heard. I looked into his big blue eyes, which had a slightly apprehensive feel about them and said reassuringly to him and his young mother that firstly, I had no intention of smacking him. And secondly, in my opinion, he was just doing the typical four-year-old tantrum thing and wanted some attention from his mother to take his mind off the boring game of basketball.

The child's mother looked at me and said she was just trying to "pass the buck and use a scare tactic" and promptly stood up and took herself and both of her children to the other side of the court to continue the struggle.

On a scale of world shattering events this is obviously hardly a big issue.

Unless of course, you pause to consider how frequently people say things without thinking about the consequences of their message and how powerfully behaviour in a child's formative years can affect the way they think and respond for the rest of their lives! Especially when that conditioning comes from someone who is charged with the responsibility of being a role model or mentor!

To improve the skills of communication ensure that you think carefully about the words and structure of your message. Ask yourself "would I be inspired to change my behaviour as a result of this conversation?"

If the answer is no then you will need to examine how to change the communication so that it has the desired outcome and then you can justifiably say "I said that and I got exactly what I wanted"!

Can you say that?

### **PERFORMANCE ENHANCING "STUFF"**

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act but a habit."

**Aristotle**

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