

Knowing What Is Really Going On – The Basis for Good Decisions

One of the best CEO's we've ever worked with was Aubrey Reid, the head of The Paul Revere Life Insurance Company in Worcester, MA. They were a major writer of disability insurance that was purchased by Provident and is now a part of UNUM/Provident.

One of the reasons why Aubrey was a great leader was because he knew everyone in the company and always seemed to know what was happening. This didn't happen by accident. Few people knew this but there was a small office behind his regular office. On the wall of this anterior room was an organization chart of the company with every employee listed. Someone from Human Resources kept his chart up to date every day and briefed him on any pending changes.

At least twice a week Aubrey would eat in the company cafeteria. He never sat with other executives. He always found a table of regular employees with an extra chair and asked if he could join them. We watched him do this on several occasions. He was polite, friendly and quickly put everyone at ease. He could usually impress them with his knowledge of who they were and where they worked. He asked questions where appropriate but never "pumped" anyone for information. But twice a week he gave a small group of employees the opportunity to say whatever they wanted to say to him. And the employees loved it.

While Aubrey understood these lunches helped him gain the respect and affection of his employees that wasn't the main reason why he did it. He did it so he would understand what was happening within the company. He understood that he needed to have the best and most complete information to make the best decisions. This could only come from a broad array of people.

In this era of "spin" it's clear that everyone you talk to has an agenda. To understand a situation you need to do two things. First, you need to understand who is providing you information and what their agenda is. Almost everyone you'll talk to has a point they want to make or a goal they want to achieve. You need to understand what this is so you can fairly evaluate what they are telling you. And then, in order to get the most accurate picture, you need to get your information from as many sources as possible.

Aubrey had a good group of executives and talked to them regularly. He respected their opinions and felt they did a good job. But he also recognized that one of the reasons why they were effective was because they were focused on results. Each had a point of view and an agenda. By understanding this and by talking to many people, Aubrey got the best understanding of what was going on and therefore was able to make the best decisions.

Sometimes it's necessary to talk to an expert outside your company to get the information or insights you need. Please give us a call. We help companies like yours every day. It's what we do. It's why we were created.

Also please visit our web sight at McDonaldConsultingGroup.com.