

Turbo Leadership Systems

The **TURBO** **Charger**

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LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

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"I'm Right!" "NO! I'm Right!"

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Give up trying to be right all the time

Matt, General Counsel for MEI Group, Inc. one of the largest excavation and heavy civil contractors in the Portland Area, told Session 10A of the Leadership Development Lab (LDL):

"A couple of weeks ago, I was asked by the company chairman to advise regarding wage withholding for our new benefits program. Everyone had different answers, different opinions for him, but somewhere the new laws are clear. The HR Director had worked for months preparing to implement the program and she was frustrated. Some of our people didn't seem to be listening to her, "They *knew* what to do." She was following direction from our benefits company and "They *knew* what to do." The benefits company was telling her not to withhold from paychecks until September. The press was reporting that employee withholding starts January 1. I could see the real challenge was more about the conflict and hurt feelings around the office regarding the changes.



Victim/Accountability Model



"I researched the legal answer and learned that our private insurance would cover the benefit without withholding until September. Even at that time, it is considered employee contribution to the insurance policy rather than 'withholding.'

"The crux of the problem: a misunderstanding of the meaning of 'withholding.' Once I explained to the chairman that our employees would be contributing to the insurance premium in September but that is different from the government plan, he was satisfied. Then, I explained to HR and payroll that we are not participating in the state plan in January. I clarified that we begin with our private plan in September and withhold insurance premiums at that time.

"The lesson I learned from this experience is that I need to help solve the actual problem and not get too distracted by what others think is the problem. The answer defining "withholding" is easy. Smoothing out the conflict was harder and more important in the long term.

"The action I call you to take when solving problems is always consider the feelings of people involved in the issue. Their feelings may be the real problem, always work to solve relational issues. Recognize when a problem has an easy answer that is being obscured by a conflict. Solve the conflict and the problem!"

"The benefit you will gain is you will build a foundation for problem solving that avoids the distraction of personal conflicts. You will have a more cohesive team."

As I heard Matt's story, I wondered what part of the state's language and the insurance company's explanation may have played in causing confusion, misunderstanding, resulting in the conflict? Who knows? What we can learn from this story is to give up always wanting to be, "*I am right!*" Instead, look for "what's right." Learn to say, "*I could be wrong, I frequently am.*"



*Stop trying to be right,
instead look for what is right."*

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