

The Eyes of Leadership

The sad fact is that most people see the worst in others – they see them through the eyes of their own anger, fear and limitation. If someone shows up late for a meeting, they impute a negative intent on that person, saying “they are so rude”. If someone makes a mistake on an expense report, they grumble “that person is so dishonest”. If someone miscommunicates a point, they silently say “she’s a liar”. Leaders are different. They look for the best in people.

I want to be clear. I’m not suggesting that leaders do not confront reality. Not at all. What I’m saying is that the best leaders see through the eyes of understanding.

If someone is late, they try to get to the truth. Maybe there’s a time management problem to coach around or a sick child to help. An error on an expense account could be the result of a poor process in place or the employee’s disorganization. The miscommunication might be all about the person communicating having weak skills in this area. An opportunity for improvement.

Today, rather than looking for the worst in people, I invite you to look for what’s best within them. Sure some people really are inconsiderate or dishonest or uncaring.

But in my experience – and I’ve worked with a lot of people over the years – most people are good. Few human beings wake up in the morning and ask themselves:

“What can I do today to mess up someone else’s day or undermine my credibility?” Most of the mistakes people make are the result of a lack of awareness. And here’s the payoff for you: as you seek out the good in people, not only will they want to show up more fully for you, but you will see more good in your world.