

**Openings:**

*April showers bring May flowers.*

This is definitely a well-used phrase and, on the cusp between these months, it is a hopeful reminder of the beauty and warmth that follows every grey, wet day.

**Spotlight:** Each day, you face the challenge of making the right decisions for your enterprise. Your success in facing this challenge is usually measured in terms of the outcomes. If the day goes well, you made the right decisions and if the day unfolds in a less than satisfactory manner, you take credit for that as well: the quality of your decisions impact the outcomes. Still, it is possible to make all the right decisions and have everything go wrong. Conversely, a faux pas can have unexpectedly pleasant results. So, as you are turning out the lights and heading home, how do you know that you made a difference this day?

From baby-faced recruit on through to grizzled veteran, and from CEO to receptionist, the question remains the same. Neither length of service nor sphere of influence changes the one basic question: did I make a difference today?

Every person within your enterprise wants to know that their efforts make a difference and their presence matters. Beyond any other obligation, an enterprise must ensure that all stakeholders feel valued and are acknowledged. When an enterprise fails to meet this obligation, stakeholders—often slowly and by degrees—stop caring and start considering the deadly question: why bother?

The difference between these two questions is the difference between your enterprise succeeding and failing.

As long as a person is questioning his contribution to the enterprise, he is focused on what he can give. He views himself as a part of the enterprise and does not distinguish between his success and that of the enterprise. He cares about his work.

Most everyone is familiar with what happens when a person stops caring. Whether that person is an employee, a customer, or a stockholder, the cost to the individual and the enterprise are incalculable. Lack of caring is a poison that flows quickly and unpredictably in all directions.

If there is a decision that individuals make between caring and not caring, what can the enterprise do to influence that decision? All that is required is to foster an environment that encourages caring. Creating such an environment requires both a remembrance that the enterprise exists to serve all its stakeholders and also a willingness to get out of the way: two simple tasks that can take a lifetime to master.

**Quote:** Author Reshad Feild offers an interesting perspective on the challenge of making decisions.

*"Danger automatically comes about as the result of the decision-making process. It is not possible to make a real decision without involving danger. We cannot even make a decision to go out for dinner, taking the family and a few friends and perhaps driving ten miles to some favourite restaurant, without there being danger. It is simply not possible."*

**Musings:** The joke once went that at IBM, perspective employees tried on a blue three-piece suit and if it fit, they were hired. The truth behind the joke is that with most businesses, employment is based on similarities rather than differences. The more homogenous the workforce, the easier it is to manage and with everything that there is to do in running a business, who needs extra complications.

Fortunately, along with the complications, a diverse workforce gives an enterprise a level of immunity from stagnation. The daily interaction between people with varied interests, perspectives, and histories build resiliency and flexibility into the enterprise. It is a certainty that tomorrow's challenges will be different from the challenges of today and the resourcefulness of employees determines how well the enterprise will address those challenges.

All businesses have their equivalent to the IBM three-piece suit. What would happen if instead of looking for people who "fit", you looked for a few "misfits"?

**Facts & Figures:** In Britain, gardening has been described as the "ultimate danger sport". According to the latest data, one in five of all domestic fatalities, and one in five of all accidents, now occur in or around the garden. Most of these incidents involve the use of ladders or power tools. Last year, 62,500 adults required hospital treatment following a gardening mishap.

**Lexicon:** Personnel—from the Latin *persona*—are the people employed in an enterprise. Recently, this term has been almost universally replaced by the term Human Resources. While this new term has a warm, soft tone, its use can blur the distinction between people and the resources of production. It is not an Orwellian leap to complete the transition from person to human resource and finally to biological machine. Human Resources may be the ultimate oxymoron.

**Just For Fun:** In a list of memorable quotes compiled by travel agents, the follow comment issued by a prospective traveller stands out: *"We'd like to get away from it all, but stay within walking distance of a Starbucks."*