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Brief: Two blog posts on truthfulness, written in the CEO's voice, based on an interview – one to stand alone, the other to accompany a video that promotes a boardroom breakfast on the topic

Publication: Integrity and Values corporate website

The violence of silence – how lies cost you real money in your workplace

[Blog Post: 500-600 words, to stand alone]

Several years ago we were approaching the end of year. We'd made budget and were shooting for our stretch goal. One more sale was going to do it.

I bagged the sale. I was thrilled with myself!

I told the team that we'd done it – that we'd made the goal. And we were planning how to spend the money.

I'm not talking about frivolous spending here – I don't really go for flash cars or anything. But I had big plans for how that extra money could go into the business to make life a bit easier for all of us. And, of course, because we'd met our stretch goal it meant that staff were going to get bonuses, so I'm sure that they were making spending plans too.

But hidden at the bottom of my excitement was a little lie.

You see, we have a rule that a sale isn't a sale until the contract is signed and the first payment is on board. And although I had all the paperwork in place for this new contract, the money hadn't been banked.

And in the back of my mind was a little, niggling, doubt.

And I kept that doubt to myself. I told a little white lie of omission to keep everyone feeling optimistic about year end.

The types of lies

There are three types of lies:

- We lie outright – that's a lie by commission.
- We lie by omission – that's what I call *the violence of silence*.
- And we lie by collusion – where I know it's a lie, you know it's a lie, and we both let it pass because it's easier that way.

But why do we lie?

Two main reasons. The first is fear. The second is to preserve people's feelings. We're being nice.

Why did I lie about my little niggling doubt? Why did I subject my team to the violence of silence? I was afraid of making them feel bad – I felt FEAR and I was being NICE.

If you've spent much time reading my blog posts you'll know how much I love an acronym, and here are two more to add to your collection:

False

Nothing

Evidence	In me
Appearing	Cares
Real	Enough

When we work in an environment of FEAR we're creating false evidence to use as the basis of our decisions. We can't make good decisions with false information.

When we're NICE to people to preserve their feelings, we're just perpetuating the uncertainty they are feeling – because you don't lie if you're feeling secure. What we're doing is being nice to them to preserve our *own* feelings, not theirs.

The cost of the lie

By now you're probably starting to predict what happened to my awesome sale where I hadn't banked the cash.

The day before the first payment was due, the CEO called me to pull out of the deal.

I could have held him to the letter of the contract, but he had good reasons to pull-out, and I didn't want to burn the bridge because I felt that he would come back to us – which he did, recently.

But losing the sale meant we hadn't met our stretch goal. It meant that my team wasn't earning bonuses. It meant that a staff member who desperately needed an assistant – and still does – didn't get the help she needed. So, you can see that we're still paying the price for that lie – the cost has compounded over time.

How to avoid the lie

My favourite technique to achieve truthful and honest conversations is *inoculation*. It's one of the important lessons you learn if you do one of our programs. It licences people to tell the truth.

Ray Dalio, founder of Bridgewater Associates, the world's largest hedge fund, calls it practicing *radical honesty and transparency* and he attributes some of his success to it.

Yes, the truth may be upsetting at first, but it's a low price to pay for avoiding the inevitable blow-up after those lies have compounded for a while.

And you know it's working because you'll start to see improvements to *the system*. In your business, *the system* will start working properly – you'll find yourself spending less time putting out fires and more time driving your business forward.

And that's how practicing radical truth pays you dividends, with interest.

The violence of silence – how lies cost you real money in your workplace

[Blog Post: 250-300 words, to accompany video]

I was at a client in Newcastle about a decade ago, watching mining equipment being loaded up for shipping to a mine in Western Australia.

The dispatcher said, “They’ll be back in a fortnight.”

I was flabbergasted.

“Why?” I asked.

“They’ve got faults in them,” he pointed at a few things, “see, here, and here. They won’t fit. They’ll send them back.”

“If they’re faulty, why are we sending them out?”

“On-time delivery.”

You might say he was kidding himself. I call it *the lie*.

The business was lying to itself. Sure, its on-time delivery numbers were excellent, but its rework numbers were off the scale.

Every movement of that equipment cost the company \$3000 – that’s not counting the actual rework cost – and it was happening multiple times each month. Just the cost of transport, over five years, was \$219,000.

That’s the cost of a lie. And we all do it – I tell more stories in the video, even my own – and it hurts our businesses and kills off future potential.

We lie outright – that’s a lie by commission.

We lie by omission – that’s what I call *the violence of silence*.

And we lie by collusion – where I know it’s a lie, you know it’s a lie and we both let it pass because it’s easier that way.

For now!

We usually lie to save someone’s feelings – usually ours, despite what we tell ourselves about sympathy for others.

Those lies return us a short-term benefit – a bit of peace, avoid some conflict, we can hide inside our comfort zone – but the long-term cost has compound interest added. It’s the high cost of avoiding an awkward conversation.

Watch my video and you’ll hear how we lie in the workplace, what it costs us and how to move to a better place – what Ray Dalio, founder of the largest hedge fund in the world, calls *radical honesty and transparency*.

