



Get: The Rest of The Story...

Many of you (at least us old guys and gals...) may remember Paul Harvey's radio program, "The Rest of The Story." Harvey would paint a picture of an event or situation which would lead the listener down one path. Then, with irony infused, he would fill in the gaps, bringing a clarity to the story along with a life lesson not soon to be forgotten.

Recently I was speaking to a NextGen family business team. The topic of accountability came up. This isn't always an easy one to address, particularly when it's in a family business context. No one wants to be called out. And no one particularly relishes the idea of playing bad cop and calling out a family member.

The layers got peeled back and all parties agreed to practice a "no spin zone" style of communication. Don't make yourself look better than you really are. And don't make "the other" look worse than they really are.

So, "the bad cop" called out a sibling. A message had been left for that team member to return a phone call. The next day, the bad cop happened to overhear another phone call by that team member asking, "Oh, didn't she call you back?" In our meeting, the bad cop labeled this as spin. It wasn't "she" who was to call this customer back...

The rest of the story: Fortunately, we were able to slow things down and push rewind. The team member who was called out had spoken with "she" and asked her to return said phone call. The bad cop didn't know that.

This is where elephants get bred in front of us – in the room. If we had not had the conversation about accountability and "no spin" what are the chances that the bad cop would have begun to NOT respect, NOT trust the other team member? I'd say pretty high.

How do we combat this breeding of elephants? Let me offer two suggestions:

1. Keep short accounts. Relationships drift when communication isn't regular. Get your team together for regular conversation. Have an agenda. Circulate the agenda ahead of time. Assign a note taker, who will distribute the meeting notes and invite edits. CLARITY can help eliminate unnecessary conflict!
2. When confronting someone (practicing healthy accountability), create space in the conversation by starting your confrontation with a statement like, "I may be wrong here, but here's what I've observed. Maybe you can help me understand."

Getting the rest of the story before jumping to judge-and-jury mode. You'll be glad you did!