

THE SECOND ALARM

BRINGING VALUABLE RESOURCES & NEWS
ONE ALARM AT A TIME

AUG/SEPT 2015

SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE



VALDOSTA FIRE DEPARTMENT

A Department Without Limits

Editor:
Sgt. S A Miller



BIRTHDAYS:

FF CLIFTON WILKERSON 08/03

LT JOHNNY HENRY 08/04

FF BRADLEY DONALDSON 08/12

SGT MARCUL HAYNES 08/16

FF CHRIS STEVICK 08/16

SGT SHELLEY MILLER 08/18

WILLIE NEWKIRK 08/18

SGT PHILLIP WOMACK 08/19

FF SCOTT GAREN 08/25

CAPT JAMES CLINKSCALES 09/02

SGT MICHAEL NIEHANKE 09/11

SGT ISAAC HARRIS 09/13

FF LAMAR BERRIAN 09/14

FF TRAVARUS SANDERS 09/27

BC FRANK MCMILLAN 09/29

CHIEF'S TOPIC OF THE MONTH

While attending the FRI (Fire & Rescue International Conference) last week, I had an opportunity to meet several newly promoted Chiefs from across the country. It was comforting to see VFD is not the only department that appears to follow the 80/20 rule. "The Firefighters," 80/20 rules is 80% of the department will be happy and 20% will never be happy, regardless of what you say or what you do. It is often baffling that some are often unhappy about changes that were implemented because of their recommendations. I guess the saying "be careful what you ask for" is often an understatement. When reading one of my daily quotes, I found one that I thought was relevant to this month's topic "It's

ok to say NO" which says "You have the right to say no. Most of us have very weak and flaccid "no" muscles. We feel guilty saying no. Your no muscle has to be built up. The more you say no, the more it comes naturally"—unknown. No is one of the most profound yet perturbing word in our vocabulary. However, NO may not be a popular word Chiefs like to use; however, it does come natural for most Chiefs that are effective leaders in their department and communities to ensure organizational values are a priority. I think a quote I heard from a Fire Chief explains it best, "As Fire Chief's we all make unpopular decisions, we



Freddie D. Broome, Fire Chief

just have to determine which unpopular decision is the best decision for the organization." Thank you for your continuous support and commitment to our department as we strive to be "A Department without Limits."

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY



On July 11, 2015, Valdosta Fire Department Fire Chief, Freddie Broome, married Candace Johnson in Winston Salem, NC. Welcome to the family Mrs. Chief Broome.



ATTA BOY—DONE DID GOOD

Thanks to everyone who support the 2nd Annual Blood Drive (Guns vs. Hoses). VFD on-duty and off-duty members showed up to support the community and department. We raised a total 70 pints of blood. VFD beat VPD 36- 34

City Manager, Larry Hanson, sends his kudos out to Fire Chief Freddie Broome for his appointment by the International Association of Fire Chiefs to the Human

Relations Committee. This appointment “speaks volumes as to the standing of Chief Broome among his national and international peers...” Congratulations to Chief Broome.

RUMOR MILL—HAPPENINGS AND GOINGS-ON?

Chief Broome created the Assistant Chief position for Chief Boutwell. False! The department has always had an Assistant Chief position; however the position was defunded until recently. The position was funded by reclassifying the vacant Shift Captain position.

Chief Broome is over the promotional process and responsible for selecting “too many” books for the upcoming promotional process. True! Chief Broome worked with the testing vendor for weeks to develop the reading list and written examination for the upcoming promotional process.



EVENTS—HAPPENINGS AND GOINGS-ON

Citizen Fire Academy—Starts September 1—October 27, 2015

Broome if you are interested in attending

Conference taking place September 16-19 on Jekyll Island

teering may contact Capt. Clinkscales

MDA Boot Drive will be September 3rd, 4th, and 5th

9/11 Memorial Ceremony at Station 1 (0845hrs)

Habitat for Humanity— Wednesday, September 9, 2015, VFD has partnered with Habitat for Humanity to build the first house with a residential sprinkler system. Anyone interested in volun-

If your church, club, or organization has a special event that you want the Valdosta Fire Department members to know about, please send that information to the editor by the 18th of each month.

9/11 Morning Prayer Breakfast (0700-0830hrs). Seats still available. Contact Chief

9/11 Memorial Stair Climb. Contact Ashley Tye for additional information

2015 Georgia Fire Service

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Those of you with a keen eye may have noticed that these last two newsletters have been special double issues. The last couple of months have seen our fire department begin a new fiscal year, we have been visited by ISO, our fire chief has gotten married, plans have been made for promotional exams (including the preparation of reading lists), PowerDMS was introduced as our primary training tracking program, classes were conducted, and I’m sure I’ve missed several more things that have happened or are happening even now. To boil it down: we’ve been busy.

But even amongst all this busy-ness, we’ve kept up with our primary business of serving and protecting the citizens of Valdosta, Georgia, be they full time residents, part time students, passing through, or they just work here before returning home somewhere within the Metro-Valdosta area. And from what I’ve seen, this public that we serve are truly appreciative of the job we do whether or not they take the time to send a letter or note to Chief Broome for the newsletter’s “Atta Boy” section. If you haven’t visited the Valdosta Fire

Department Facebook page yet, you will find several members of the public showing their appreciation for what we do for them and the community at large.

If you’re anything like me, any compliment I receive is greeted with an “Aw, shucks...” and a brief flash of embarrassment (though I couldn’t tell you what I’d be embarrassed of). I’d thank the person and do the best I could to extricate myself from the conversation, depart as quickly as possible, or change the topic if I couldn’t get away. I think it would be helpful if we had a class on accepting compliments graciously... I think it would help me immensely.

I only bring up these things because I want you to know that you, as a firefighter, as a public servant, are appreciated by the public you are protecting. No matter how busy we get, be it with structure fires or car accidents, be it with ISO inspections or pre-plans, be it with Friday truck detail or Saturday station detail, we are appreciated. Couple that with the chance to belong to a respected and hallowed brotherhood, and it seems that we are truly lucky indeed.

EMPOWERING BUGLES—NOTES ON LEADERSHIP

While sarcasm at the workplace can inspire fun and creativity, it can also bring down morale.

by Adam Galinsky, Li Huang, Francesca Gino

“Don’t work too hard!”

Imagine that your boss says this phrase to you: What do they mean? Well, it all depends on the context.

If you had been burning the midnight oil and pulling a series of late-nighters, it is likely said with great sincerity. Your boss may be expressing deep concern that you are wearing yourself out and need to get some rest.

But consider a different context: your boss says “don’t work too hard” after you are caught watching a cat video on YouTube. In this case, the phrase is intended to be sarcastic – your boss is suggesting that you might not be working hard enough.

How would the sarcastic statement make you feel? Will that sarcasm have other effects beyond your emotional reaction? We have recently [published](#) a number of studies that pinpoint the precise effects of sarcasm with wide implications for organizations and relationships.

Before we can begin to understand the consequences of sarcasm, we need to define what sarcasm is. It is a statement that is intended to communicate one’s meaning through language that signifies the opposite.

Sarcastic comments are often positive statements that really communicate a negative state of the world; we call these negative sarcastic comments. For example, a classic one is the statement “What a beautiful day” while watching the pouring rain. Or after someone makes a mistake, an observer says, “Well done!”

But positive sarcasm also exists, where a negative statement really implies a positive situation. From saying “You are the worst” to someone who has just done something nice to you to exclaiming “you look terrible today” to someone who is unusually dressed up.

First, let’s consider how sarcasm makes you feel. For positive sarcasm, a giggle usually follows. You get that the person is being ironic or that they are actually complimenting you. Negative sarcasm, on the other hand, often produces resentment, anger and frustration.

Here is the problem for negative sarcasm in the workplace: it can be a breeding ground for conflict. One study [analyzed 60 management teams](#) and found that sarcasm among team members was an important cause of poor performance in struggling teams.

Even when people recognize the humor, they can still feel resentment and seethe with frustration. Sarcasm is a sting that often lingers.

But there is something else that we have discovered about sarcasm. It is also a catalyst to creativity. What is most interesting is that it doesn’t matter if the sarcasm is positive or negative and it doesn’t matter if you are expressing the sarcasm or only hearing it. Any utterance of sarcasm, regardless of who says it, makes your mind a bit more creative. Basically sarcasm exercises the brain more than a sincere comment; indeed, neuroscience studies show that sarcasm increases neural activity.

So, how can something that often engenders such ill will produce something so important to organizations?

To understand the creative benefits of sarcasm, we need to return to its definition. Remember that a sarcastic speaker says one thing, but really means the opposite. Both constructing and making sense of a sarcastic comment requires that one recognize and reconcile disparate ideas. This is the essence of creativity.

Expressing and accurately receiving sarcasm requires a flexible mind. This is why autistic individuals have so much trouble with sarcasm. Autism is correlated with obsessive-compulsive disorder and inflexible routines. The mind of an autistic individual often doesn’t have the same capacity for mental flexibility. This link from rigidity to not understanding sarcasm is often humorously highlighted on the television show the *Big Bang Theory*, where the main character, Sheldon, can’t follow sarcasm despite being a brilliant physicist.

Now the million dollar question is: How do we harness the creative benefits of sarcasm without creating the type of conflict that can tear a workplace apart?

It comes down to one word: Trust.

Trust is the foundation of any healthy relationship. Trust both smooths the cogs of social interaction and is critical for reducing and keeping conflict at bay.

Let’s go back to the opening example of your boss catching you watching a cat YouTube video and saying, “Don’t work too hard.” If you trust that your boss thinks you are a great employee and has your best interests at heart, then you are likely to smile at the comment. It won’t sting (or it won’t sting as much). But the best part is that although the sarcastic comment won’t incite conflict, it will still create creativity.

Trust also explains why sarcasm is such an important part of flirting. It’s a critical part of playful banter.

To successfully capture creativity without conflict is somewhat of a balancing act. There are three considerations to keep in mind.

First is frequency: Don’t use sarcasm so much that it gets tiresome. We don’t want to exercise our brain all the time. Sarcasm work best when it is surrounded by sincerity.

Second is extremity. Sarcasm works best when it doesn’t express too much scorn or contempt. So keep it light and only use negative sarcasm when you want to express subtle disapproval.

Finally, you need to think about the receiver’s sensitivities. There is nothing funny in mortifying someone by highlighting their vulnerabilities. We all know the person who makes sarcastic remarks about a topic someone is deeply self-conscious about; those can sting the most, even in a trusting relationship.

Sarcasm is a useful tool at work, but it is a double-edged sword. So go ahead and pepper in some sarcasm when your team needs a creative jolt. But remember not to push the sword in too deep.

Adam Galinsky is currently the Vikram S. Pandit Professor of Business at the Columbia Business School at Columbia University. He is also co-author of the forthcoming book, Friend & Foe. Li Huang is an assistant professor at INSEAD. Francesca Gino is a professor of business administration at Harvard Business School.

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