

LEADERS, WHO IS HOLDING YOUR MIRROR?

By Marilyn Thiet

We all have our blind spots. The things we do and say that leave an untold ripple effect on those around us. Many of us are very lucky to have people in our lives that will help us hold the mirror and uncover those blind spots. This may be a manager, a co-worker, a spouse, a friend. Sometimes it is held at a pretty direct angle so that we cannot miss seeing the obvious. Other times they may hold that mirror at a bit of an angle, hoping we will catch a glimpse of what they are seeing, an angle that we may not see when we hold the mirror for ourselves.

As I coach and work with managers and leaders of organizations we often discuss the fact that it is “lonely at the top”. The higher you go in an organization, the fewer “friends” you have. And with that truth, comes the consequence of having fewer people available to hold the mirror for you as a leader. What impact are you having on your team? Are your meetings, whether one on ones or with the entire team, leaving them sapped of energy and motivation or invigorated and ready to take on the world? Do you leave an emotional wake behind you as you interact with your team, in the end making them less productive? Do you make excuses for people leaving your organization, blaming the people, the economy or anything else rather than your leadership?

As a leader is it critical to find someone you can trust to hold that mirror at all angles for you. This cannot be someone who will only tell you what you want to hear, but rather someone who is able to deliver the truth in a way you can see it. Who is that for you? It should take you less than 5 seconds to name that person, if they do indeed exist. If you were not able to do so, it is your obligation as a leader to find that person. It should be someone on the inside of your organization, who lives and feels the impact of your leadership. It should be someone whose eyes are wide open, who is able to see, hear, and feel the ripple you are creating, both positive and negative. Depending on your level within your organization, it may be a challenge to find someone who is courageous enough and cares enough to hold the mirror at every angle for you. But take that challenge, find that person, and hand them your mirror.