



# talking about...

June 2008

... designing better relationships for better outcomes

## On Standards

*"A culture is not an abstract thing. It is a living, evolving process. The aim is to push beyond standard-setting and asserting human rights to make those standards a living reality for people everywhere."*

... Mary Robinson (1944 - ) Irish political leader

One thing we know about all human beings is that they have opinions and are continually in a process of making assessments of their experiences and the people they know or know about. Our assessments and opinions are not baseless rather they are steeped in standards often seen as the values, preferences and prejudices we hold in life. Hence whenever we hear an opinion or an assessment we can also infer a standard. Given that our opinions and assessments are very personal in nature, it follows that our standards are also personal in nature. Yet even though our standards are based on our own experience they are also born out of the standards of the communities in which we live. From the time we are born, we are observing the standards of those around us and using this as a basis for understanding the world in which we live.

One of the breakdowns we regularly see in issues between people lies in a difference of standards that show up in different assessments of a situation leading to some sort of conflict or disagreement. More often than not people do not consider the standards on which their assessments are based but enter into an argument to force their point of view. If standards form the basis of assessments and these assessments are then used to make decisions, it follows that the more consistent the standards within a group of people, the more consistent will be their decisions. This is not limited to technical standards and includes standards associated with performance, behaviour and relationships. Yet conversations to establish shared standards are often foregone.

Consider these questions.

How well do you know your own standards? If you are not able to easily articulate your own standards, you will not be able to articulate them clearly to others. If you are not able to easily and clearly articulate your own standards, what can you do to do this? A good place to start with this is to look at key opinions or assessments you hold. These will point to some underlying standards.

If you are aware of your key standards and can easily articulate them, how often do you communicate these to others and, if needed, generate a shared standard to deal with situations? You might consider your work situation here, particularly if you lead others. Here you can look to points of conflict and you will almost certainly find differences of standards. What can you do to better develop shared standards?

Ultimately shared standards will always provide a much better platform for more effective group interactions and outcomes.

*"A world community can exist only with world communication, which means something more than extensive shortwave facilities scattered about the globe. It means common understanding, a common tradition, common ideas, and common ideals."*

... Robert M. Hutchins (1899 - 1977) Educator and Writer

## When Hell Freezes Over ...

*I have a feeling that we may have sent this one out before, but it came into my in-tray recently and I find it so clever I couldn't help but share it...*

*The following is an actual question given on a University of Washington chemistry mid term exam. The answer by one student was so "profound" that the professor shared it with colleagues, via the Internet, which is, of course, why we now have the pleasure of enjoying it as well.*

Bonus Question: Is Hell exothermic (gives off heat) or endothermic (absorbs heat)?

Most of the students wrote proofs of their beliefs using Boyle's Law (gas cools when it expands and heats when it is compressed) or some variant.

One student, however, wrote the following:

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First, we need to know how the mass of Hell is changing in time. So we need to know the rate at which souls are moving into Hell and the rate at which they are leaving. I think that we can safely assume that once a soul gets to Hell, it will not leave.

Therefore, no souls are leaving. As for how many souls are entering Hell, let's look at the different religions that exist in the world today.

Most of these religions state that if you are not a member of their religion, you will go to Hell. Since there is more than one of these religions and since people do not belong to more than one religion, we can project that all souls go to Hell. With birth and death rates as they are, we can expect the number of souls in Hell to increase exponentially.

Now, we look at the rate of change of the volume in Hell because Boyle's Law states that in order for the temperature and pressure in Hell to stay the same, the volume of Hell has to expand proportionately as souls are added.

This gives two possibilities:

1. If Hell is expanding at a slower rate than the rate at which souls enter Hell, then the temperature and pressure in Hell will increase until all Hell breaks loose.

2. If Hell is expanding at a rate faster than the increase of souls in Hell, then the temperature and pressure will drop until Hell freezes over.

So which is it?

If we accept the postulate given to me by Teresa during my Freshman year that, "It will be a cold day in Hell before I sleep with you," and take into account the fact that I slept with her last night, then number two must be true, and thus I am sure that Hell is exothermic and has already frozen over. The corollary of this theory is that since Hell has frozen over, it follows that it is not accepting any more souls and is therefore, extinct... leaving only Heaven, thereby proving the existence of a divine being which explains why, last night, Teresa kept shouting "Oh my God."

This Student Received an A+.

***"Curiosity is lying in wait for every secret."***

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