



PETRA PROCESS

THE TRUTH DOESN'T ALWAYS HAVE TO HURT



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LIFE LESSONS for BUSINESS OWNERS

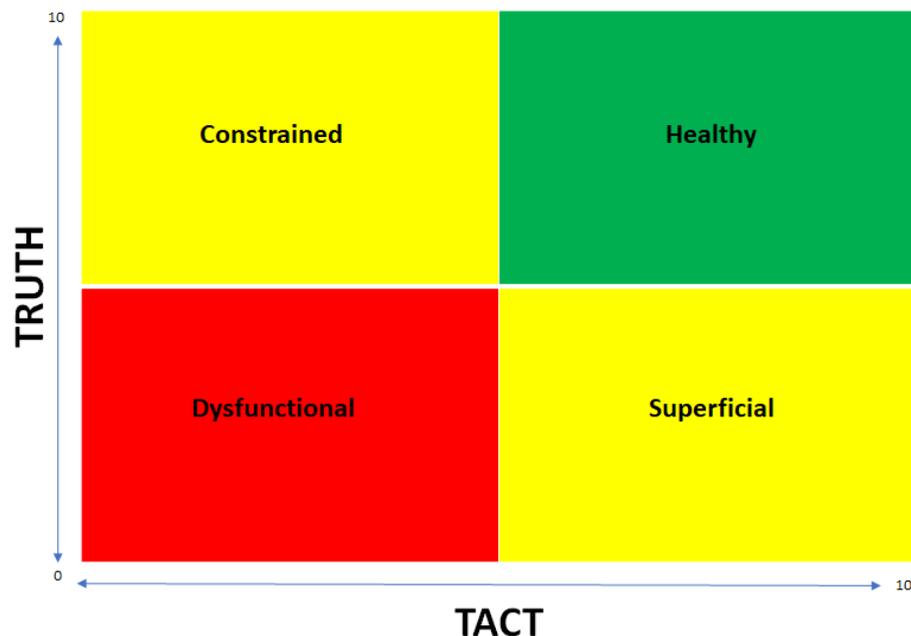
We've all heard the expressions. "The truth shall set you free" (John 8:32). "The truth is rarely pure and never simple" (Oscar Wilde). "The truth hurts" (everyone).

Unfortunately, accepting the truth is easier said than done. People tend to prefer justifying the daily mistruths rather than challenging them. Many simply avoid confrontation out of fear of making others uncomfortable or feeling uncomfortable themselves.

However, I'd like you to consider that the truth doesn't have to hurt. In fact, the truth may just be the competitive advantage your organization needs. Instead of simply accepting existing behavior, you can realize major gains by directly addressing the truth and building an organizational culture that does the same.

THE TRUTH/TACT MATRIX

Now, don't misunderstand me. I'm not suggesting you say whatever is on your mind without a filter. Tact is an essential component of telling the truth, one that requires practice, thoughtfulness, and restraint. As an entrepreneur and business coach, I have observed that the quality of the relationships within and culture of an organization can often be judged by examining the intersection of truth and tact in that organization:



When relationships are high on truth but low on tact, they are constrained. People generally shut down when they are talked at instead of talked to, which limits trust and prevents open discussion. I see this situation often in circumstances where people know each other really well, get too comfortable, and fail to use tact. Despite their truthfulness, these interactions can cause company cultures and individual relationships to break down.

Relationships that are high on tact but low on truth are superficial. Consideration is shown and exchanges are cordial, but these interactions lack substance. These high tact/low truth environments put on a good show, but they are unable to thrive because deep care is missing. Real issues don't get resolved. I see this situation often in bureaucratic organizations where folks don't have any stake in the outcome, nor do they feel connected to a core purpose.

When we are low on truth and low on tact we have dysfunction. Environments where we are not honest and direct and we are tactless in our interactions generally don't produce much success or fulfillment. These cultures are toxic, and turning these environments around requires significant change from the top down.

When we are high on truth and high on tact — where great trust and respect exist — we have healthy relationships and cultures. This is the zone you want to live in, both personally and professionally.

I'd encourage you to use this matrix to score your most important relationships and your company culture as a whole. Where do you stand? What can you do to improve?

If you want to take the first steps toward adding more truth and tact to your own leadership style, here are a few tools and tactics for doing so:

1. COACHING LIKE A LEADER

Michael Bungay Stanier wrote a book, *The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More, and Change the Way You Lead Forever*, about the benefits of utilizing coaching as a leadership style. Stanier's book covers the importance of asking the right questions and provides seven essential questions you can use to optimize communication and relationship development. I have personally found these questions essential to my communication with my own team.

2. SHARING EXPERIENCES VS. GIVING ADVICE

If you're an Entrepreneur's Organization (EO) or Young Presidents' Organization (YPO) member, you are likely already familiar with this philosophy. Generally speaking, people don't like to receive advice. They do, however, love to hear stories about others' experiences. Instead of telling people what they should do, share something that has happened to you that is related to the situation at hand. This allows people to draw their own conclusions and learn their own lessons from your story.

3. POSITIVE BEFORE NEGATIVE

Studies show that although you may feel better when you get good news last, you are more motivated to do something about the bad news when you get the bad news last. Improved development and long-term results almost always trump instant gratification.

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All of the tools I utilize in my business communications revolve around the tough and sometimes awkward task of telling the truth. However, if you can muster up enough courage to tell the truth to your employees, colleagues, family, and friends, you have taken the first big step toward improving your relationships for the better.

This article originally appeared in Recruiter.

THE PETRA EXPERIENCE

The Petra Experience is like a Mental Marathon of focused effort to create a specific set of priorities and a planned process to achieve them... as a team.

Looking to change your business life - forever?

The daily grind of growing a business is tough... it doesn't have to be that way. We work from our own business experiences while focusing on your business – as coach and an accountability partner. We implement the Petra Process in a way that ensures it “sticks” then we stay engaged to keep you on your path to success and less frustration. We don't want this to be just another thing you start – then it gets ignored and finally dies... let's stop that cycle in your business. The Petra Program 'clarifies' what is most important to be done – by whom, by when – **AND** creates an accountability structure to ensure **IT GETS DONE.**

*Greg Eisen is an entrepreneur coach with business coaching firm Petra.
Visit his blog at www.petracoach.com for more business and leadership insight.*

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342 Cool Springs Blvd., Suite 203, Franklin, TN 37067 | 888.330.1020
www.petracoach.com | www.facebook.com/petracoach

