

Management In Real Life

by Kevin Herring

It's my favorite time of the year again - Christmas! Although I no longer have the benefit of enjoying snow for the holidays, a consequence of living in Tucson, I still enjoy engrossing myself in Christmas music and movies. My all-time favorite Christmas movie is the Dicken's classic tale, *A Christmas Carol*, with George C. Scott as Scrooge. What a great story to inspire concern and caring for our fellow beings!

Being one of those stereotypical management consultants that just has to relate everything to his profession, I have often wondered how old Ebenezer would fare in today's society. I have never known a boss to keep the thermostat so low in the office that employees had to wear gloves and coats at work like Bob Cratchit. However, I did recently learn of a man who gave his employer a two month notice of leaving and the employer rewarded him by telling the man's wife, also an employee, to inform him that he was fired. The man's wife was understandably upset and immediately resigned. I suppose this employer would qualify as a Scrooge, although I think Ebenezer would have been smart enough to consider the cost of losing both employees.

Years ago, I worked for a division president who, when several employees requested an early business closing for preparations the day before the holiday, insisted that everyone work a full day. He said that if people were allowed to go home a few minutes early that year they would expect a few more minutes the next until eventually they obtained another whole day off. It reminded me of the statements Mr. Scrooge made to Bob Cratchit, "...you don't think me ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work...A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December...Be here all the earlier next morning." Hmm...definitely a resemblance.

On the other hand, there is Scrooge's nephew, Fred. Fred is the antithesis to Scrooge. In the story, he states that "There are a good many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited..." He describes the Christmas season as "...a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And...though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good..."

Many in today's world would see Fred as something of an idealist, a pushover - someone only found in another Christmas classic like *It's A Wonderful Life*. But the boss that repeatedly drove 25 miles out of his way to visit a disabled employee sure looks like a modern-day Fred to me. Or consider the sales manager who took a sizable portion of his year-end sales bonus and distributed it to those in the department who directly supported him all year. Definitely Fred-like behavior.

Have you experienced Scrooges and Freds in your life? If so, I would be interested in your stories. Who knows? Maybe someday one of them will become a Christmas movie!

Let's also consider how we conduct business in our own lives. I wonder if I showed up in old England in *A Christmas Carol*, would others refer to me as Ebenezer or as nephew Fred? You might wonder the same. Those we've worked with over the years certainly know either way. Hopefully they'll be kind and keep it a secret from us this Christmas season.

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At Ascent we believe that organizations are only as successful as the systems that engage the individuals who work there. Ascent Management Consulting is committed to creating management, culture, organization, and governance systems that enable personal fulfillment and organization effectiveness.

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