

HYPE...or...HUMILITY?

Discerning Managers Know the Difference

By John Pearson

Most of life is a continuum with lots of gray area. Prayed-up, serious, thoughtful managers know the difference between hype and humility. But where's the balance?

You're the department manager and you want to "lead like Jesus." What do you do?

- You're the editor of your ministry's newsletter and your consultant wants the CEO's photo sprinkled throughout the publication, not once, but at least four times.
- You're on the "dust-off-our-mission-statement" team—and a board member wants to add a line about being a "world class" ministry.
- A donor just gave your ministry its largest gift ever, but wants to be anonymous, while another giver (at half the amount) is hinting that the new office wing should be named after her.
- Your regional director for Africa is doing radio interviews on your biggest breakthrough ever—but he's not crediting a partner ministry that opened the door for you.
- Your recruiter will speak at dozens of churches and campuses this year, but believes a strong, biblical message will have more lasting impact than the \$25,000 video you just rushed through production for him. "It's too edgy," he says. "We're not edgy and never will be."

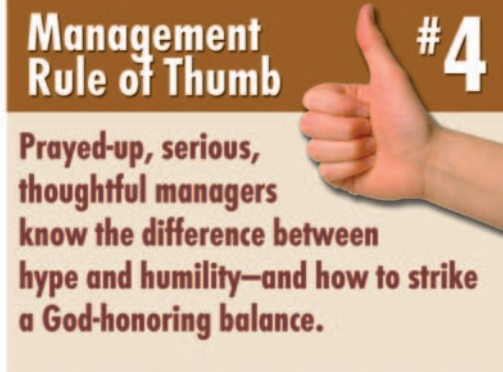
Tone Down the Hype— Upgrade the Research

To tone down the hype about your organization, upgrade your research. In the last two years, more than 200 Christian organizations and companies have participated in ground-breaking research, sponsored by the Best Christian Workplaces Institute (www.bcwinstitute.com) and *Christianity Today* magazine. CMA members save 10 percent when participating in the 2005 Best Christian Places to Work program. Register before the Oct. 31 deadline and enter "CMA" when prompted for the promotion code.

Frankly, the confidential data has humbled some organizations—but that's good. And others have been blessed to realize that an annual anonymous survey among their team members has pinpointed unheralded strengths and helped them focus on areas that need improvement.

Participate in the 2005 Best Christian Places to Work program (deadline: Oct. 31, 2004) and you'll have factual, verifiable hype to be humble about! The honorees will be announced at CMA Long Beach 2005, April 25-28, 2005, in Long Beach, Calif., where our 28th annual conference theme is, "Lead Like Jesus."

- Your church website has the tagline, "One of the fastest growing churches in America." A survey had you on the list two years ago, but it may be doubtful today.



Where's the Balance?

So what's your role, as a manager, in helping your department, your ministry, your board members, your CEO, and your publicists to lead like Jesus? Here are some thoughts:

1. Agree that hype is harmful. The too-good-to-be-true headline or "Isn't God good to us!" speech might attract attention, but discerning people will recognize it for what it is: hype. Over-the-top claims will tarnish your good name and shatter trust.

Sure, sometimes you do have to toot your own horn, but stick to the verifiable facts. And use others (testimonials, research, surveys, awards, etc.) to affirm your work.

2. Acknowledge that self-serving humility rings hollow. If God has blessed, share the good news. Donors, staff, volunteers and even your vendors will celebrate with you. Don't hide your light or dim it.

3. Strike a balance between hype and humility. Some leaders and managers have an informal "kitchen cabinet truth squad." They've recruited a small feedback team who are frank truth-tellers.

Truth-tellers will ask you tough questions to keep your work God-honoring: "Jordan, I know we're to aspire to be excellent and effective, but are the words 'to be world class' the right phrase for our Vision 2010 strategy?"

"Arnie, the press keeps reporting that we have 3,000 church members attending weekly. Shouldn't we report that we have less than 1,000 actual members and that the 3,000 includes attendance at all events, not just the Sunday services—meaning we count a lot of people twice?"

"Allison, your new employee orientation talk was terrific this morning, but you said we have the best team spirit of any ministry in Colorado Springs. How have you been able to document that?"

4. Research and data, if presented with integrity, are not hype. Instead of introducing a speaker, "Dr. Smith is one of the world's most popular speakers," which is not verifiable, say, "Dr. Smith has presented his biblical seminar in 37 countries over the last 35 years and is the author of 17 books that made the Christian Marketplace Best-sellers list." Or, maybe you just want to say, "Dr. Smith, we're sincerely humbled that you agreed to speak this morning. Thank you. You're on!"

John Pearson is the president/CEO of Christian Management Association. You may email your feedback to John@CMAonline.org. © 2004, Christian Management Association. All rights reserved.