

# In Defense of the Facts

## Fast Answers Coaching Session



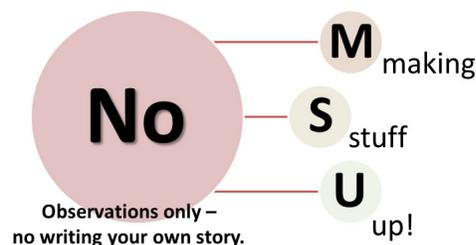
“In the absence of the facts, people will make up a story.” The reality is that the stories people make up in the absence of the facts are, most often, far more frightening than the truth. Also certain, guessing will cause relationships to be challenged, opportunities to be lost, and much wasted time getting things back on track.

Look at this concept in two ways. There are the stories we make up in our head about what people are saying...or not saying about us, to us, and around us. These act to break down relationships that impact quality and content of our work. The second way to look at this concept is that the information NOT shared from above will act to break down confidence, engagement, and commitment to our ability to get work done.

Let's consider the day to day personal side of communication. In the absence of the facts, people make up stories. For example, John fails to reply to your urgent email asking him for critical information you need to meet a short deadline. You follow up and still, no reply. Your reaction: John is trying to sandbag you! He is purposeful in withholding information knowing it will cost you in meeting your goal. He is out to get you!

Stories like this always have three things in common:

1. They are **inaccurate**
2. They are **incomplete**
3. Human nature dictates they will be **negative**



What if John simply didn't get your email? What if John was on travel status and didn't have access to his email for an extended period of time? What if... Well you get the idea, right? In this example shared by a coaching client, the truth was that John had been in a car accident, ended up in the hospital overnight, and had to rent a car to get back home after his fateful trip.

The way to resist going down the rabbit hole is to simply stop and ask yourself “what would a video camera capture?” A negative look, a passing comment, an unanswered email, or a phone call not returned could have a very different meaning than the one you making up in your head.

As a leader, absence of clarity and complete information breeds uncertainty. Uncertainty translates into anxiety. Anxiety translates into fear. Fear removes the filters and results in negative feelings, behaviors and actions.

As leaders, our default response when we see the negative behaviors of this chain of events is to react only to that. We fail to go “upstream” and look at what might have prompted the negative event. More importantly, we don't take responsibility that our own inaction (failure to inform, be transparent, be vulnerable, or be present) could have eliminated, or at least lessened, the negative behavior we see.

The best step to helping at team of people to stand firm in times of adversity is to communicate, inform, engage, and give CLEAR unfiltered information. People can manage what they know. They can make plans, they can seek support, they can process. When people are without clear information, they will make up a story...and you know the rest of that statement.

Never give your people a chance to, *in the absence of the facts, make stuff up.*