

EXEC: (*calmly, pleasantly, factually*): "Mike, I think we've hit a snag."

Then surprise him even further by stating what he (Mike) probably thought would happen:

EXEC: "Now I suppose you think I'm just going to pound on the table and say, 'Dammit, get those reports in on time!' But that's not very constructive, as I see it. Although it would make me feel much better 'cause what you're doing is giving me a lot of grief and creating a problem for the whole group."

Let's see what this does. You can quickly see that the Exec has defused the situation without losing sight of what he wants to accomplish. He has injected some information about his sensitivity **to how Mike** probably feels *and*, very important, how *he*, the Exec, feels. A human touch, sorely lacking in most such exchanges . . .

The most important thing he's done, however, is to use that most elusive, difficult element guaranteed to startle—the truth! Saying out loud what both of you are thinking. Being authentic doesn't happen often enough in our daily lives.

The truth is guaranteed to startle whenever we hear it. And to make us feel relieved. It puts us both on solid ground and actually draws us closer. For the boss to tell Mike the truth of how he feels makes it safe for Mike to tell the truth and admit to his feelings, too.

The only other ingredient missing in the Exec's opening is a little lightness of touch to get the ball rolling. That's easily inserted. Watch:

EXEC: (*smiling*): "Now I suppose you think I'm just going to pound on the table and say (*pounding table in an exaggerated way*), 'Dammit, get those reports in on time!' But that's not very constructive, as I see it. (*Pauses, laughing*) Although it would make me feel much better, I'll tell ya, 'cause what you're doing is giving me a lot of grief and creating a problem for the whole group!" (*Then get serious*).

Adding some animation (see parentheses) and humor to any delivery energizes both of you and gives some balance to the exchange.

### ***Humor***

It's surprising how rarely we allow that extra dimension—lightness and humor—into our business dealings. Work is serious to most everyone. Very serious. But too many people lose their sense of humor and proportion as they concentrate on accomplishing a goal.