

Sunday Morning Peer Pressure

One of the blessings of working in “Corporate America” can be the quality of people that you have the opportunity to work with. Lexmark has carried on the IBM tradition of a very high quality work environment. This includes trying to hire high quality people, maintaining a high standard of ethics and professionalism in the workplace, and trying to properly balance your work life with your personal life.

During my 15 years at Lexmark I have had the opportunity to develop a lot of close friendships. My father – who spent 30 years with IBM – always told me that the best part of his working life was the quality of people he was able to associate with, and the many close friendships he formed – some of which have carried on into his retirement years.

Many of these friendships are with men of similar background to my own. We share a lot of similar values and interests including family, career, and sports. As some of the friendships grew we began to share time outside of work which may include weekend dinner outings (including spouses), special event parties (holidays, Super Bowl, etc), and recreation opportunities such as golf or fishing.

For a variety of reasons one of the preferred times for the recreation outings is Sunday morning. There are many Sunday mornings in the summer where golf outings are organized, or fishing trips in the fall and spring. I am fortunate enough to be included on many of the invitations, which make me feel good from a camaraderie perspective, but because of my commitment to our church I usually decline.

The responses I get from some of my colleagues are interesting. Some of my colleagues seem to understand and respect my position, some will tease me in a friendly way (Can’t you just skip church – what’s the big deal?), and some have viewed my position as “holier than thou”.

I have never been very outspoken or evangelical about my faith. Everyone’s style for sharing their faith is different, and I have always tried to share mine through actions and lifestyle – since I’m not very confident about publicly sharing mine through words. As a result I have not given much of a response to the reactions outlined above – other than to continue to politely decline and to continue to attend church. For whatever reason I find I am able to stand firm on this issue – while I may not find it so easy to stand firm on other issues.

I think this raises some interesting questions and thoughts as it relates to our workplace:

- 1) Even as adults – peer pressure can be a very powerful dynamic. While invitations to recreation outings can appear to be an insignificant issue – the peer pressure can be strong. Is it hard to stand by your convictions in the workplace?
- 2) Is it easier on the more obvious issues than some that aren't so obvious – such as this?
- 3) How do we witness to our colleagues – without turning them away?
- 4) Knowing we spend a lot of time at work with our colleagues, how firm of a stance can we/should we/do we take – knowing we risk being alienated?
- 5) What other areas of our work life are challenged by peer pressure?
- 6) How does Christ call us to respond?