PIPELINE ®
PERFORMANCE GROUP, LLC

Never Flustered, Never Apathetic, Never Attitudinizing

We have led many control room team training sessions teaching non-technical skills. A part of the course are assessments through self-ratings of situation awareness, decision making, communication, assertiveness, teamwork, leadership, and professionalism. The assessments include both positive and negative behaviors and actions.

The purpose of the assessments is for people to identify what they do well and what they could improve. Some people do not enjoy completing the assessments. One wrote in the class evaluation that he "felt like he had been in a shrink's office most of the day." A few express they find the assessments helpful, even if they do not enjoy the experience. That is a philosophical approach. Everything does not have to make us ecstatic in order to help us.

I suppose pipeliners are not much into self-reflection. Perhaps I do too much evaluation of my poor character and bad behaviors. Most days I feel like a line from the song *As I Go* by the Steep Canyon Rangers, "I always try to do what's best; I've mostly done the opposite."

There might be value in all of us asking regularly how we are conducting ourselves in control rooms and out on the pipelines. Particularly, it could be valuable for us to consider how our behaviors affect those with whom we work and collaborate during normal, abnormal, and emergency operations as we go about our tasks.

Marcus Aurelius was a soldier, a Roman emperor, and a practicing Stoic. He wrote his *Meditations* to help himself live a worthy life. The quote below contains some good advice. They can help us if we apply them. Ask if they can be applied to control room management.

To live each day as though one's last, never flustered, never apathetic, never attitudinizing: here is the perfection of character – Marcus Aurelius, Meditation 7.69

A flustered person might be agitated or confused. Someone who is apathetic shows little interest, enthusiasm, or concern. One who attitudinizes behaves unnaturally in order to impress or to produce some nonhelpful effect. Are these worthy qualities for any pipeliner?

Let's think about a Controller showing up for a shift. Suppose it is a night shift. How well will the shift go if one is flustered, apathetic, and attitudinizing? How well would it go if everyone in the control room behaved that way? These are easy questions to answer, I think.

I am not convinced that good behaviors are contagious but have observed that bad behaviors spread easily. There was a group of people at a training session whose attitudinizing was not helpful to the learning experience. It started with one or two disruptors and then spread to others. I recognize that some people resent having to attend training sessions, but a good starting point might be to do our best even if our usual practice is to do the opposite.

Let's do some self-examination. Are you seeking perfection of character? Are you improving both your technical and non-technical skills? Are you getting better day by day? Are you never flustered, never apathetic, never attitudinizing? Ponder these questions and meditate upon them just as Marcus Aurelius did centuries ago.

Consider if it might be valuable to make some practical changes. It is entirely up to each of us how we fulfill our roles and responsibilities as we go through life and work.