

You already knew, only you did not want me to speak it

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I was watching a really old episode of Stargate SG-1 and that line was spoken. The context was when one person was on trial for something he had done in the past and was being defended by another. It got me thinking. How many times do we know things but refuse to acknowledge them or reject them as false when someone else raises them up to us?

As a business owner and consultant I often had to tell clients things we discovered in their business that were not easy things to talk about. And the reverse is I also had to hear things from staff and others that I did not want to hear. One of the most difficult conversations I had to have with a client was when my staff told me the reason there were so many repeat problems on one of the computers there was due to an executive in the firm going to explicit websites. They didn't want to say anything to the client because they didn't want to rock the boat. I had to weigh what the impact on our relationship with the client would be if we spoke up and also how it might affect their business if we did or didn't speak up.

We talked for quite a while and you could see that they were finally ready to acknowledge the problem. Sadly, readiness happened after they spent a lot of money that did not need to be spent. Has that ever been you? Were you unwilling to face the reality of what someone was telling you because it would create friction, cause a confrontation with someone, or make you change something you were doing? Did you know something about yourself that you refused to deal with because you did not want to admit you had a problem with it or with someone?

I had a former client that had their computers confiscated by the FBI. Rather than consider the possibility they were guilty, I chose to ignore that feeling in my gut and kept doing business with them. I said to myself, it cannot be true. I trusted these people. In a few months I was out thousands of dollars as they reneged on paying us for new equipment. Then they were arrested and indicted. We never saw a dime of that money owed to us, even after we hired attorneys. Others tried to caution us, but I would not hear them. I refused to hear what I knew to be true.

My parents raised me to believe honesty is the best policy and all world religions place honesty high up on the list of things to do. So why do we refuse to be honest with ourselves and others? I am not talking about hurting someone, but I am talking about being truthful with them and with ourselves.

I know I have blown off phone calls, made excuses for not getting together with someone, or even delayed replying to a prospective client because I didn't want to tell them I didn't like them, would never use their product, or we didn't want them as a client. Wouldn't it have been easier to say to the sales person, "I am not interested in your product but thanks for calling", rather than "I'll look at it. Why don't you call me back in a few weeks?", and then not answer the phone? Isn't it better to tell the prospective client you don't feel they are a good fit and give them names of others who can help them better rather than get them annoyed that you haven't responded to their proposal request? Or what about just saying to a friend who wants to get together, "I really just want to stay home today, alone" rather than making lame excuses like I have too much work to do or worse, saying yes, and then being annoyed the whole time you were out because you really wanted to be home?

I challenge you to spend some time asking yourself the tough questions and being open to the answers you get. Be honest with yourself and others. Remember honesty does not mean hurting others or yourself. It does mean finding a way to tell them if something they are doing is hurting them or you, and then being there to help them, and you, get through it.

Laura Steward Atchison is a creative entrepreneur and writer who brings wit and wisdom to her fans. Her

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