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Lessons from the (Uncensored) Backstories of “The Interview”

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For those who have followed the heated discussion¹ about censorship, the movie in the title of this article is about two American journalists who attempt to “take out” the leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, generally known as North Korea. It is distributed by Columbia Pictures, and its parent company Sony Pictures Entertainment was hacked by North Korea as a warning against the movie’s release.

I have *not* watched the movie “The Interview.” Therefore, the following discussions do not have much relevance to the plot. They are backstories that are puzzle pieces to a grander picture of everyone’s development. These notes will appear obvious at first, but ultimately serve as reminders to those (myself included) who repeatedly overlook the same steps and end up moving backwards.



SIMPLIFY WORK AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

Co-director Evan Goldberg revealed that a scene in the movie was digitally “recycled” from the movie “22 Jump Street,”² which is also distributed by Columbia Pictures.

Reusing work *with comprehensive citations and documentation* is a valuable skill for actuaries. I get excited whenever I collaborate with peers who have mastery in factoring out common codes and models to simplify work. Systematic errors can be systematically fixed. Making your work easily understood and reused by others is a courtesy (not a job requirement) that everyone appreciates. It will help you form a mentality of service (not servitude) to others.

AVOID TRADING LONG-LASTING RELATIONSHIPS FOR FLEETING SUCCESS

Randall Park is the UCLA alumnus who played the North Korean leader in “The Interview.” Before accepting the role that brought him such notoriety, he consulted with his South Korean grandparents,³ double-checking that they would not be disturbed to see their grandson acting as their Darth Vader. While this step may seem extraneous, it is a sign of respect that precludes all unnecessary awkwardness should the elders have thought the role was inappropriate.

In a similar manner, actuaries and managers can *communicate explicitly* with peers regarding how they might feel about their (possibly sensitive) decisions. No one wants to get into a situation where it is too late to apologize.

FIND THE KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM THAT WORKS FOR YOU

According to a Bloomberg report, Park Sang Hak was a North Korean who defected to South Korea and initiated an organization called Fighters for a Free North Korea.⁴ This organization plans

to drop via balloons 100,000 copies of “The Interview” into North Korea. The justifications for such an act deserve another debate, while the method is undeniably unconventional. It serves to illustrate (with its own extremities) that people with innovative ideas should find the platforms that work for them.

Actuaries who are passionate about reaching the next generation can share their experiences in the publication *The Future Actuary*. Society of Actuaries (SOA) and Casualty Actuarial Society (CAS) members can try publishing across the chasm to build on similar interests. Even the “inexperienced” (or so the humble ones call themselves) can start with “nano presentations” internally. If you are an actuary and you have an idea, share it.

ADAPT TO DYNAMIC CIRCUMSTANCES LIKE A CHAMELEON

The movie was originally designated for Kim Jong-*il* instead of Kim Jong-*un* before the father passed away.⁵ Directors Seth Rogen and Goldberg had to modify the story accordingly to match the new reality.

In a similar manner, actuaries are familiar with new assumptions for both market and non-market risks. Frustrations (versus genuine curiosity for solutions) with model changes are litmus tests that indicate inflexible models. Mood is an important factor in teamwork (at home or in cubicles), so avoid letting your models and mindsets jeopardize your team’s performance.

PROTECT YOUR OWN WORK

Two South Korean hip-hop artists have sued Sony for allegedly using their songs illegally in the movie “The Interview.”⁶ This event reminds everyone about the importance of protecting one’s work and crediting the work of others.

This is applicable to other parts of life in addition to model development in the actuarial ecosystem. Citing others is also a form of protecting oneself from unnecessary responsibility for errors by others.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

It has been half a century since Otis Redding released the song “Respect.” However, hacked emails⁷ from Sony reveal that such a reminder is old wine in new bottles. Everyone has different definitions of the line between maturity and freedom of speech. It is at everyone’s discretion to determine their own vulnerability to public opinions should their speech appear on headlines.

GET TO KNOW OTHERS (WITHIN COMFORT ZONES)

Rogen chose Park for the role of Kim because “Randall played him as a lot more sheepish and shy, which was much funnier.” This depiction contrasts to the image of Kim portrayed by news reports, which may prompt Joker to ask, “Why so serious?”

Such stark contrast in portrayal (regardless of credibility) reminds all that people *may* have disparate layers of characterization. Perhaps your strained relationship with someone indicates a call for you to communicate with him/her on a deeper level (within his/her comfort zone).

“The Interview” is a typical movie built out of a sense of Schadenfreude.⁸ The backstories behind the bold development of such a movie are sufficient to enlighten us on (possibly) new perspectives in developing ourselves as “glocal”⁹ citizens. ●

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ENDNOTES

¹ The heat of freedom of speech continues in France as it witnessed two terrorists end the lives of 12 Charlie Hebdo contributors for controversial cartoons.

² <http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/seth-rogen-interview-north-korea-controversy-cover-story-20141217>.

³ <http://www.aol.com/article/2014/12/19/the-interview-actor-randall-park-talks-playing-kim-jong-un-so/21119056/>.

⁴ <http://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2014-12-31/north-korea-sets-up-task-force-to-keep-the-interview-out>.

⁵ <http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/seth-rogen-interview-north-korea-controversy-cover-story-20141217>.

⁶ <http://www.latinpost.com/articles/28993/20141229/south-korea-artists-yoon-mi-rae-tiger-jk-sue-sony.htm>.

⁷ <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/sony-hack-leaks-emails-with-racial-jokes-amid-the-interview-premiere/>.

⁸ Enjoyment obtained from the troubles of others.

⁹ Relating to the connections or relationships between global and LOCAL businesses, problems, etc.