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## Leadership Inspiration: A Slap on the Face

By Juan Arroyo

*Editor's note: In the Leadership & Development Section's Leadership Inspiration Contest, entrants were asked to tell us what inspired them to be better actuarial leaders. Here is the winning entry from the Defining Moment in Your Life category.*

**H**ave you ever had someone come to you randomly and tell you something that felt like a slap on the face? Many years ago, I heard the best feedback generally comes unsolicited. That's what happened to me two to three years into my role as an actuarial leader.

Before I got the leadership role, I remember frequently expressing my opinions about how badly the leaders of the department handled the workflow. Here are a few examples:

- Certain types of projects went to the same people.
- Some studied all the time and others were working extra hours all the time.
- The most complex and intriguing projects were kept by the leaders.

One of the phrases I liked to use was, *"When I get to be a leader, I'll make sure I delegate the right way."*

The chance came a few years later. I was doing well. My team was meeting or exceeding expectations. We were doing great things. Everything was going smoothly.

Until one day—I'm walking down the hallway with a couple of teammates when Craig, a prior direct report to me, said, *"Juan can I give you some feedback?"* A few seconds later, he says out loud for anyone to hear *"You DON'T know how to delegate ..."*

Even though he proceeded to share his reasoning behind the statement, I didn't really hear anything after "delegate." It hurt. I was shocked. Craig's statement forced me to realize I had done exactly what I had complained about a few years earlier.



I was handling the "big" projects. I was maintaining control of the spotlight. I was delegating only the items I thought my team could handle at the moment.

I probably could have given logical explanations for all my decisions, but they didn't matter. Craig's words brought into my awareness that I had no idea what I was talking about in the beginning. He helped me understand that there's more than meets the eye; that a leader has many more things to consider when making decisions.

To this day, Craig's words serve as a reminder that, no matter how good I think I am, it is always important to keep seeking different perspectives before jumping to conclusions. ■

*"You will never get dumber by making someone else smarter; if you empower them to give back and share."*

—Stanley Marcus Jr.



Juan Arroyo, ASA, MAAA, can help you design your unique blueprint for an outstanding life. To start your journey from here to there without overloading your to-do list, contact Juan at [juanononecoaching@gmail.com](mailto:juanononecoaching@gmail.com).