EVERYBODY, SOMEBODY, ANYBODY, NOBODY

I saw a little story the other day. It was about four people – Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

The foregoing fascinated me. After reading it, I recalled many experiences where things didn't get done because nobody did what anybody could have done. The following was a typical scenario: Two or more people would discuss a matter. It might be a problem that needed solving, a new idea to improve an existing condition, etc. After thorough discourse the people involved agreed on a course of action. All too often the final statement regarding the matter was, "we have to do that".

As the story at the beginning illustrates, assigning a responsibility to "we" is a dangerous thing to do because no one has been given, or assumed, responsibility to carry out the action that has been decided on by everybody.

Since nothing happened after the first meeting, one of two things occurs:

1. Everybody forgets about the decision that was made and the matter never gets taken care of.

2. A second meeting is held to determine the status of the suggested course of action. If there are no minutes or notes, the second meeting is usually nothing more than a rehash of the first meeting.

Both, one and two above, are unacceptable. To avoid this outcome three things need to be done:

1. Somebody needs to accept the responsibility for "getting it done". Somebody can assign parts of the job to anybody in or out of the group.

2. An acceptable "completion date" must be agreed upon by everybody.

3. If future meetings will likely be required, dates should be selected while everybody is still together.

We have made this format, "standard operating procedure", in our business. Bette and I have also adopted this process in our personal lives. It has helped us to stay on task and has really made a difference in everything we do. Everybody knows that Somebody is responsible so Nobody has to worry about Anybody getting the job done.

GTW | 3.15.16