



## **Facts First – Then React**

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As a Project Manager, I tend to instinctively relate most events in life back to that profession. I have been thinking about the situation with Shirley Sherrod (Georgia's Agriculture Department Director). This is an ongoing story at the time of this writing and this blog is not a political or news blog so I am not writing about this from that viewpoint nor am I indicating if what is happening is right or wrong.

However, here is a very brief summary of the current situation as I understand it: a video was posted of Ms. Sherrod talking about a situation where she discriminated against somebody she was supposed to help. She was fired forthwith. Now, more of that speech is being shown where Ms. Sherrod explains that she was wrong, that she corrected it, did end up helping the individual and she made a much larger point about her role in her organization and the role of race.

In Project Management, we are always being asked to do more with less, do it faster, stay on top of everything and numerous other clichés meant to encourage (force?) us to act and react as quickly as humanly possible. Well, that often means that we react to the facts *as presented to us* and not necessarily to all the facts or an objective view of the facts. And, while we may be presented a set of facts with a certain “spin” from another team member, lets not forget that we have our own internal “spin” of how we are understanding those same facts. My thoughts about getting all the information and this current situation made me think about projects I have been on where I have reacted first and then later learned more facts. More than once I have had to go back to individuals and apologize. And, unfortunately, a time or two the damage was already done and apologies didn't matter (to the person or the project).

My point is that as a Project Manager, I need to try and obtain as many of the facts before I react. I know that isn't always easy and there is a line between “analysis paralysis”, discovering facts and being over-reactive to a few bits of information. One great way to discover more of a story is to ask those involved rather than assume the worst or assume the bits of information that I have are the complete story.

Perhaps a Risk Management plan would help with some things that occur during the course of a Project. But, in the case when something new pops up and it “demands immediate attention” and a course of action, perhaps I need to take a deep breath, determine if I have all the information that I can reasonably be expected to obtain and then make a decision. There are legitimate times when immediate action might be required but I think that if we react to everything like it requires an immediate reaction we may be creating extra pain for ourselves for when we learn more information.