

Flip

by James Lynn Smith

Judy was one of the few engineers I could talk with at work. She came to my office after the meeting. “That was quite a row in there. You and Boss Betsy really got into it.”

“Yeah, it got out of hand. She’s spending too much on temporary personnel to pass housekeeping inspections. But it’s from the same budget area that supports equipment modernization. Without that money allocated, I can’t do my job and I’ll look idle.”

“If she causes it, why is that bad for you?” Judy asked.

“I think Betsy hates me and wants to lay me off. Her lame justification is that the customer firm is not writing detailed orders for my work. But they don’t have to since the contract requires us to use our own acumen to update technology. So she makes me look like deadwood by her spending on temps and denying in-house requests to have me work on modernization.”

Judy took a deep breath. “I doubt she hates you. She just wants to look like an efficient supervisor for her boss. Betsy’s new and doesn’t know how to prioritize yet. You have a defensible issue. Still, at the meeting, you didn’t have to compare her supervision with that of an intoxicated dart thrower.”

“That was after she called me a puffed up frog, flipping contract pages and trying to look important.”

Judy snickered. “Yeah, I heard that.”

After a resigned sigh I said, “I have looked at this from our company’s perspective and considered both our behaviors. I would apologize for my behavior,

but she invited the name calling. I'm torn between apologizing or not. I can't get it off my mind."

Judy lowered her voice. "There's a way to handle it."

"What's that?"

"If a choice is stymied because your motives are equal and opposite on both sides of an issue, let something change the situation."

"Like what?"

She smiled. "The answer to that is in your pocket. Feel inside and tell me what you find."

I shoved my hand into my side pocket. "Only keys and a couple of coins."

"Take out a coin. Flip the coin instead of contract pages. Heads you apologize, tails you look for another job."

I reluctantly removed a coin and flipped. It came up heads.

"Now the situation has changed," she said. "You can move forward."

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Seems dumb that such a tactic would work, but I followed through and went to see Betsy. Afterwards, Judy came back to my office.

"Are things copasetic now?" she asked.

"Yes, looks like I'll keep my job, but for the duration of her temp hiring, I'll be loaned to another division and work on a telescopic system."

"Good deal, you succeeded and got what you needed."

I hesitated. "Although I apologized, I'm not sure that deep down she doesn't still hate me."

"Hunh," Judy said. "You did your part. If she wants that burden, who gives a flip?"
