

Serena, You're Hired

By David Mantey, Editor, PD&D

"Hey, Old Man River, zip it or I'll break your hip." – Sonny Koufax, Big Daddy

I realize that I lead a fairly unorthodox twentysomething life, but I never thought that I'd find myself in a heated debate with a fellow bar patron over how Serena Williams' latest outburst translated to justified dedication in the workplace. And to quash premature speculation, the Packers were still in the first quarter of a 21-15 come-from-behind victory over Chicago. Bears fans, recognize.

Everyone was up in arms. How dare Serena? (As if amateur tennis fans around the world were suddenly on a first name basis with the star). Where does she get off? That's not passion, that's immaturity and has no place on the tennis court. After a line of serious questioning (one question), I found out that everyone in the argument didn't even watch the match.

I found even more hilarity in the fact that they hadn't a clue who was even on the other side of the court, or the circumstances surrounding the situation. Apparently, novice tennis aficionados only require a 10-second SportsCenter sound bite to condemn a career.

My fellow debaters' childlike opinions aside, my point was this: I am passionate about my job. If you tell me I am wrong when I believe I'm right, we will engage in a gentlemanly disagreement. Now, it may not be an obscenity-laced, blood-curdling tirade (depending on the other parties involved and his/her ability to terminate me on the spot), but I'm going to support my decisions and/or stand up against those imposed upon me with which I disagree.

If you catch me on a bad day, I might even combat the decisions I agree with – thus an associate coining the expression, "playing the David's Advocate." Poor company? Probably, but easier on the ears than 'devil.'

What happened to the passion in the workplace? The state of the economy seems to have scared too many into tail-tucked passivity. And we're tucking while paying 2009 prices on a 1997 income according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#) [1] – so I suppose that we're tucking while collectively bending over. I imagine it winds up looking like something similar to the fetal position.

I understand the demand to work harder/longer, I just don't know how so many are doing it without passion, without fire. We're not even smoldering if we're out to condemn the most public spectacle of workplace passion. I'll choose to maneuver

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around other more political examples, because in my experience most people don't even rely on the sound bite; their opinions are fear-based and older than their mothballed letterman's jacket. When did people stop reading? I digress ...

This was a part of Serena's first statement, one that had to be amended when her handlers/agent/publicist probably feared that her fans would stop buying double-stuffed Oreos after they witnessed the tragic slaying of a high-priced tennis racquet and were forced to Mad Lib the words hidden behind that horrifying BLEEP.

"Last night everyone could truly see the passion I have for my job. Now that I have had time to gain my composure, I can see that while I don't agree with the unfair line call, in the heat of battle I let my passion and emotion get the better of me and as a result handled the situation poorly."

So it wasn't a beacon of professionalism, but I'll take [passion over complacency in any job candidate](#) [2].

Trust that I'm not stoking the fire under the resident company blowhard. We can all finger the one or many who jockey for air time on a conference call - this is typically the same group you find repeating daily affirmations in the bathroom after that first cup of coffee. Not only are they blocking you from the lone urinal, but they're standing two feet from the mirror and working on the script to a Stuart Smalley update while you're trying to reach the recycled paper towel. Excuse me sir, yes, you are good enough and smart enough, but the hot air is starting to make my hands clammy.

When did it become wrong to ask why? When did it become wrong to question? When did it become wrong to say, "With all do respect sir, I don't believe that you could be further from the truth?"

Send your answers to these rhetorical questions to david.mantey@advantagemedia.com [3].

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