



DOESN'T ANYONE USE TURN SIGNALS ANYMORE?

BY JEFFREY CUFAUDE

Doesn't anyone use turn signals anymore? That was the thought running through my mind after two recent near collisions, with other cars making sudden turns or darting recklessly between lanes. It sometimes seems that people have forgotten that our roads are community spaces meant to be safely shared with others. Doing so requires giving some advance notice to our driving colleagues about what we are thinking of doing before we get involved in doing it.

Flash back to your days of driver's education and you may remember being extensively schooled in defensive driving. I can still recall the acronym SMOG as the precursor to changing lanes: Signal, Mirror, Over the Shoulder, Go. It seems like a quaint and forgotten custom nowadays that you might actually signal your intention first, check the mirror for traffic behind you, look over your shoulder to scout for cars that may be in your mirror's blind spot, and then proceed if it is safe to do so. While it may feel cumbersome, doing so often helps you avoid an accident.

Defensive Living

Given our fast-paced world, information overload, and people's greater attention to their own needs rather than those of the community, we might all benefit from having a "defensive living" mindset for life overall and for our work as a member of a team or organization. Many avoidable sources of conflict in organizations result from individuals or departments simply "changing lanes" without any advance notice to others or any real awareness of how their actions are going to affect others. Human nature being what it is, the more stressed the conditions, the

more likely individuals are to focus their attention on their own interests as opposed to shared or community interests. But if cutting people off on the road inspires road rage, similar behavior with colleagues at work or in volunteer settings can only inspire equally over-the-top reactions.

Adopting a modified version of the SMOG principle can lead to respectful relationships that acknowl-

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edge both work and volunteer organizations as community spaces. When going about our paid or volunteer work, we would be wise to:

1. Signal to all interested parties and stakeholders what our intentions are, especially when we want to introduce a significant change.

2. Check in the mirror to see if there are any lessons from the past that we should draw on to inform the efforts we are about to initiate.
3. Look over our shoulders to cast a wider net in terms of identifying how our actions might affect others and their efforts.
4. Go forward when we feel we've done appropriate due diligence. Acting in this *defensive* manner might reduce the likelihood of others finding us *offensive*.

Rules of the Road

All communities and work groups need some succinct, mutually under-

stood "rules of the road" to guide their efforts in the workspace they share with others. We certainly don't want leaders to become the equivalent of traffic cops who sit by the side of the road in their squad cars to make sure that people drive safely. They would be wise, however, to have some equivalent of the radar gun at play in their organizations, some mechanism that generates real-time feedback as to the speed at which others are operating and how much it is exceeding defined limits for community safety. Creating relationships grounded in genuine commitment among all involved and in shared ground rules often can allow for feedback between and among peers as the primary enforcement system for any violations.

Initial violations of these shared principles might send you back for a bit more driver's ed to school you in the organization's culture and expectations for individuals who want to be a part of it. Consistent lack of regard for the rules of the road should result in your license being revoked and your ability to "drive" in the organization being ended.

Driving is a privilege, not a right, as is being a member of a team or community. Our individual choices and behaviors at work and when volunteering need to demonstrate that we are concerned about the safety of others and that we value sharing the road with them. ■

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