

Howard Talks Tech

Are You A Knight or a Farmer?

First, I need to admit that I appropriated the title for this article from a terrific and prolific author whom you should definitely read; **Seth Godin**. Mr. Godin has written quite a few books and a daily blog that I believe we in the safety profession should read, and then assimilate his ideas into our thought process, programs, activities and culture. Check it out at: <https://feeds.feedblitz.com/sethsblog>

So what prompts the question in my title? When you think of the term; *Knight*, what comes to mind? A strong adversary with prolific weapons sent to challenge your life style. The knight has sufficient armor to fend off all anticipated opposition and with his identity hidden so that he cannot be held accountable for the consequences of his actions. The knights of old were conquerors who slew all who got in their way and imposed their will on everyone they encountered, maybe for a valid cause but often without compassion.

By contrast what comes to mind when you ponder the term: *Farmer*? Maybe, s/he is a solitary, anonymous individual who strives on the edge of poverty, out in the elements, to produce something of value to many people. One, who values the environment, seeks through personal effort to supply sustenance that allows others to flourish. Do we even know the name of the farmer who produces our food? A farmer lovingly tends his crop, pulls the weeds and nourishes the tender plant growth. When it matures, he *ships* it out to touch those who need it and desperately want it. The COVID-19 pandemic certainly reinforced our need of and respect for farmers.

So what triggered my initial query? We in the safety profession, seek to protect people from adverse consequences of **health** and safety exposures. We want converts, not conquests. Our tools are our persuasive skills coupled with our hard-earned character trait of integrity. We do not beat people in to compliance; rather we cajole others with the quality of our ideas and arguments. We seek to convince them to follow our lead and perform life-affirming acts. We nurture our new converts with continued respect, answer their inquiry's and provide ongoing education that strengthens their internal resolve to avoid at-risk behaviors and model best practices.

So our challenge now is to avoid the role of conquering, no-holds-barred master Knight; for the humble, behind the scenes educator, role model and perhaps the nurturing do-gooder, who fosters success, but may go unrecognized in the process. For us success is a retirement line full of unmarred individuals who think their survival was of their own making. Yet, we have given them a gift; without looking for reciprocity, recognition or reward. The role of the "Safety Artist" is to do art that touches others; simply for the joy of producing it. We have a right to get paid, but our impact far out ways mere remuneration. If we succeed we have gained a new member of our "tribe". Tribes need leaders and value the contributions of "linchpins" and in today's world it is the **thought leaders** who challenge the rest of us to excellence!

Let us emulate the farmer, strive to do work that is perceived as a gift of art. By so doing we become linchpins in our organizations. Linchpins have the best job security and in progressive organizations are the ones who get the best remuneration package.