

The potato peeler incident

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I try to help out in the kitchen whenever I can so when my wife asked me to peel potatoes, I gladly said yes. Things started out fine as I worked the knife on potato number one. Then I made the mistake of remembering that we must have had a potato peeler somewhere in the house. After an exhaustive search of at least 2 minutes I found a high quality peeler, one that is stored in its own special tube, and was ready to go take down several unsuspecting potatoes.

Half way through peeling the second potato, I did the unthinkable, and instead of scraping the skin off of the potato, I missed and scraped skin off of the index finger of my left hand. Immediately I knew it was going to be trouble. The bleeding didn't start right away, but when it did, the blood came quickly. Joanne felt terrible, like it was her fault that I was bleeding. She mentioned that the doctors at the clinic were still available, but I reassured her that while I was indeed in pain, a trip to see the doctor was completely unnecessary.

I grabbed a paper towel and held it on the injured finger in an attempt to stop the bleeding. Ten minutes later there was no luck, even though I was holding my hand above my shoulder pinching my index finger with my thumb. It must have been a sight. Being a stubborn man, I was determined that my injury would not interrupt our evening. So when my wife suggested that we postpone our walk, I told her that my finger was injured, not my legs and we should go. With a fresh paper towel to help absorb the ongoing blood, we headed out the door.

Again, it must have been a sight, a tall guy walking down the middle of the street, left hand elevated, looking like he is giving the world the OK sign. When we got home, the bleeding had slowed substantially, as had the pain. Applying a standard bandage was going to be tricky because of where the wound was located. So I tried a liquid bandage. Immediately I was reminded how much it stung to have that liquid applied to an open wound. I wanted to cry, but didn't. Eventually the bleeding stopped.

While on our walk, my hand was cramping as I continued to try and apply pressure to stop the bleeding. I was thinking how that one little cut on a finger on a hand that I don't think I use that often, could cause so much anxiety. In the business world, we often take the people who work in entry level for granted. Think what happens when one of those people suddenly call in sick or quits unexpectedly. In my experience, most companies are operating as lean as possible and any unplanned problem causes huge ripple effects.

Take care of those folks in your organization who are most often forgotten. This week take a minute to sincerely say thank you to them and ask how their jobs can be made better. Our organizations need every person to function as high as possible so that our companies can continue to make profits.

As I write this my finger is significantly better. I am actually able to type using my injured, left index finger. However, I do not see myself using a potato peeler anytime in the near future. Looks like I will have to find other, safer ways to help out around the kitchen.

Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, market president of First National Bank, Ames-Ankeny.