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LEADERSHIP, TALENT MANAGEMENT

# The Three Dumbest Things Leaders Should Never, Ever Say

by  [Dianna Booher](#) on Apr 16, 2014, 9:02 AM | [0 Comments](#)

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*“Don’t take this personally.” “Don’t bring me a problem unless you bring me an answer.” “We need to talk about that sometime.”*

If you’ve ever uttered these comments, reconsider:

## “Don’t take this personally.”

How else should you take a comment like that, delivered before a critique of your work? After all, who else did the work but you?

If a group, team, or entire department is responsible and deserves the critique, then the boss should be talking to them, right? If the comment is delivered to you personally, why would the speaker contradict himself and tell you not to pay attention to it?

Is the leader asking you to listen on behalf of someone else?

If so, should you respond on behalf of that other person? Or should you not respond at all — just relay the message?



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## **“Don’t bring me a problem unless you bring me an answer.”**

If you had the answers, it wouldn’t be a problem after all, would it?

Let’s give leaders the benefit of the doubt on this odd statement. With this comment they probably mean, *“Don’t dump your problems at my door, and expect me to solve them for you. Think for yourself.”*

But the unintended consequences of such comments produce the “surprises” that many leaders dread: stalled projects, delayed decisions, and buried disasters that unfold too late to salvage.

## **“We need to talk about that sometime.”**

This put-off may be the most puzzling statement of all.

Kimberly lingers after a staff meeting until the room empties, and then says to her boss: *“In my opinion we still need to readjust the workflow in my area. I have three employees putting in 12-hour days and two employees with only enough work for about a five-hour day. Did you get my email on that a couple of weeks ago with my suggestions for adjusting their job responsibilities?”*

The boss says, “Yes, I did. We need to talk about that.”

Long pause.

Kimberly says, *“So what do you think?”*

“We need to talk about that sometime,” the boss says, as he heads on down the hallway.

Kimberly IS talking about that. And has written about that. And has left a voice mail message about that. The we-need-to-talk-about-that stall shuts down communication like a slammed gate. One person IS talking; the leader isn’t listening.

If such pronouncements start to roll off your tongue, you may want to give it more thought.

What other common, but illogical comments come to mind?

**This was originally published on Dianna Booher’s [Booher Banter blog](#).**

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