



“ BE INTERESTED BEFORE BEING INTERESTING ”

John Maxwell

This John Maxwell quote is one of my favorites. It is so simple... so powerful... yet so rarely practiced. Unfortunately, I believe we have become a society of self-centered individuals who are busy showing how interesting we are rather than being interested in others. Social media platforms are filled with people trying to show how interesting they are. Do you (like me) ever read some of your friends' and family members' posts and say to yourself, *“Who cares?”*

Recently my wife and I had an experience which reinforced our belief that the ability to show interest in others is sorely lacking these days. We were invited by the staff of a local nonprofit for a “site visit” of their organization. Somehow, they identified us as potential donors. And indeed, we were interested in supporting this organization because they have a 50-year history of serving our local community.

As we emailed back and forth to set up the site visit date, I included information about us... I was a seasoned semi-retired nonprofit executive, and my wife was a previous volunteer at their organization. I hoped that providing this information would give the nonprofit staff a starting point to show interest in us.

But no such luck. We met with the CEO and the Chief of Philanthropy who were gracious, friendly, and obviously committed to their organization's cause.

BUT they showed very little interest in us.

Despite the fact both of our gracious site visit hosts were accomplished professionals in the “people business” they forgot to “be interested before being interesting.” We left our site visit liking the organization's cause, but not feeling connected with the people behind the cause. As a result, this was an opportunity lost for both the organization and for us.

What we hoped for during our site visit was really quite simple and not time-consuming. We weren't expecting to become best friends with our hosts. We weren't expecting them to be enthusiast about our past accomplishments and our volunteer work. All we wanted was for them to show interest in us

with a few questions: *"Tell us about the nonprofit you started?" ... "How long have you lived in this city?" ... "What volunteer work did you do here in the past?" ... "How are you liking retirement?"*

Although I think I have been fairly good at putting *"Be interested before being interesting"* into practice as a TIP leader, this personal experience of being "pitched" by a nonprofit was definitely a wakeup call.

I was reminded that when I'm meeting with someone to promote TIP, I should show interest in that person first before launching into my TIP spiel. We all want (love) to talk about what's happening in our lives, and a simple *"How are you liking being the new Fire Chief?"* (for example) would give the person I'm meeting with that opportunity.

And later, when they are deciding on if/how they want to support TIP, they will ask themselves *"Is TIP a solid organization with a worthy cause" ... AND... "How do I feel about the TIP person I met? Were they interested in me?"*

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