

MARCH 2022



SPOKANE COUNTY
CHAPLAINCY
SERVICES

“The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The realist adjusts the sail.”
—William A. Ward



SPOKANE COUNTY SHERIFF CHAPLAINCY CHAPLAIN’S MARCH MESSAGE: “DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS”

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Psalm 65:7 (NLT)

You quieted the raging oceans with their pounding waves and silenced the shouting of the nations.

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Greetings to everyone from all of the Sheriff Chaplaincy Team,

In March of 2016, the Associated Press reported the staggering number of noise complaints lodged against Ronald Reagan National Airport for the previous year. Airport officials disclosed that in 2015 they received 8,670 complaints about the noise from overhead jet aircraft. This seemed excessive to readers, until airport officials explained that 6,500 of those complaints came from one single individual. That’s the equivalent of one person making 18 complaints a day!

You know, it’s good for leaders and coworkers to be sensitive to the concerns of others about the way they operate and do business. But often those complaints do not represent the sentiments of the majority, who may be very pleased with the status quo. If we therefore implement reactive and/or drastic changes, without checking the pulse of the whole organization, we might have a larger problem on our hands.

Airports are noisy. But if the Mayor of Washington, DC had decided to close down the airport on the basis of the 8,670 complaints, and inconvenience many thousands more, it could have evoked a tsunami of criticism and complaints. The Mayor would learn the hard way that it is impossible to please everyone, and that complaining can simply be the coping device of some people.

Step one= Listen to your people. Step two= Be sensitive to their concerns. Step three= Take measured and appropriate action when warranted. But don’t neglect the vast majority or the organization’s mission for the sake of a few chronic complainers. We can never please everyone. Perhaps the greatest Biblical example of dealing with complaints comes from the life of Moses. In the book of Numbers, Moses found himself consumed by the complaints of the disgruntled Israelites. God’s answer to Moses was two-fold. First, He surrounded Moses with 70 others whom God empowered by His Spirit to help Moses carry the burden of leadership. Second, God took charge of Israel’s complaint department and took care of Israel’s needs for provisions as well as for discipline (Numbers 11:1-35).

Yes, listening to a stream of complaints can be taxing. But before we let it consume us we need to let God take charge of our complaint department. God can surround us with others to help bear the burdens, and He can quell the storms that rage around us (Psalm 89:9; 107:29; Matthew 8:23-27), even those storms that come in the form of complaints. We can batten down the hatches and trust God to "adjust the sail" for us.

Blessings from Above, Chaplain Robert Kinnune