**How To Respond to “Everyone’s Saying………”**

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If you have served on church staff or in positions of church leadership for any length of time you have heard statements such as:

* “Everyone’s saying……….”
* “Everybody thinks………..”
* “A lot of people are……..”
* “I’ve had many people tell me……..”
* “People wish you would……..”
* “I’ve heard people say……..”
* “Everyone wants to know……”
* “Nobody believes that…….”
* “A ton of people want………”
* “No one is going to………….”
* “No one likes……………..”
* “No one is willing to………”
* “Everybody hates………..”

There are several potential problems with statements that begin like these.

1. They are stated as fact, yet usually reflect only opinion
2. They involve third party hearsay
3. They imply a large number of people without quantification
4. They are usually used to justify and magnify the presenter’s position

How should you respond to such statements? Below are three settings where statements such as these typically occur with suggestions on how you might respond.

**Phone Calls, Hallways and Parking Lots**

In these types of settings it is easy to feel blindsided by such comments, as they appear out of nowhere. Simply having the presence of mind to ask these interrogative pronoun based questions can be helpful:

1. **Who specifically said this? Please provide me their names.**

(This forces them to quantify and provides you a sense of how many as well as who specifically is making these statements)

1. **What exactly did each person say? Did they give you permission to share this?**

(This will provide you more details as well as the opportunity to curb gossip)

1. **Where were you when they said it?**

(This provides you context)

1. **When did they say this?**

(This provides you a timeline)

1. **Why do you think people are saying this? What specific incidents prompted them to make these comments?**

(This provides you rationale as well as specific situations or critical events that may have sparked the comments)

1. **Why are you sharing this with me? What do you expect me to do with this information?**

(This provides insights into their motivations and expectations)

In most instances the person will cut off the conversation before you make your way through all of these questions, simply because they can’t or won’t answer this degree of questioning.

**Church Committees and Leadership Teams**

Decision making teams or committees are susceptible to being overly influenced by such statements. Having agreement to name names when making these statements can curb the effect. But, it is easy for any of us to give too much weight to such statements, so a further “test” is often helpful.

**Test for Breadth:**

1. Tally the exact number of people the group has heard make similar statements and place that number in context with the size of the congregation or the ministry in question.
2. Analyze the demographics of those making similar comments. Are they representative of an age group such as senior adults, empty nesters, single adults, young adults, or men or women, etc.?
3. Look for common threads of constituency, special interests, like passions and alliances. Are they parents, long time members, mission minded, new members, choir members, committee members, members of one Sunday School Class, etc.?

A test for breadth will often reveal patterns that provide context, credibility, understanding, validation, degree of importance and potential action steps for the committee or team.

**Test for Depth:**

1. Do the people who are making these statements demonstrate an understanding of the circumstances surrounding the situation?
2. Do the people who are making these statements demonstrate an understanding of the ramifications of the situation?
3. Do the people who are making these statements express an openness or closeness to the situation?
4. What is the spiritual maturity level of the people making these statements? Have they indicated they have prayed about the situation?

A test for depth will often reveal insights into specific communication, information and clarification that the committee or team needs to provide.