

# DARE Q & A with: Robin Bienfait



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**Q: What is the biggest mistake you have ever made? What did you learn and how did you recover?**

**A:** I was on a project a long time ago, probably within the first three years of my business career. I was asked to help manage a project with teams from across the company. It was an incredible learning experience, because it showed me the importance of getting into the “trust but verify” mentality.

How do you really know when people are only sharing the good news and not the total picture? That they really spoke to all of the customers? That they really did testing?

It's very important to look at all sides of a situation, so you have a balanced perspective. And it's a tricky balance to build a trusting team environment, without the team thinking you're second guessing their answers. Sometimes people like to tell only the good news. Recognizing it's hard to tell both the good and bad news, you need to make sure you fully verify both the positive and negative aspects of the picture.

In order to accomplish this, it is vital that you create an environment where your team is upfront and honest about all aspects of the project. To do this, you have to constantly encourage open conversations in a trusting and safe environment. This feeling of security encourages the team to work more cohesively together. Everyone is focused on common goals and a sense of responsibility to report back on what is working and what needs more support from other areas of the business. When you speak on behalf of any team, set the right expectation upfront about delivering both the good and bad news. If you are ever in a position of (*cont.*)

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**A:** (*cont.*) doing something on behalf of someone, make sure you take the time to verify, to validate that things are indeed getting done. Be certain to check in with all stakeholders.

Inevitably, we're all going to make mistakes, but I've learned that you can't look back and second guess your decisions. Sometimes, you just have to take a deep breath, and go for it! I think that mindset has been with me since my childhood. My parents had seven kids, and there was always a challenge with someone or something in our house. My mother was an eternal optimist. She could always see the positive in everything. My father was like that, too, when I was a child. If something would happen, he would focus on solving the problem and moving on. You can't only focus your energy on investigating fault. I find myself passing on

those values to my sons as well. Sometimes you have to make a decision and stick with it. Buckle in and enjoy the ride!

***“...make sure that the job you’re doing is always something you want to be involved in and associated with.”***

**Q:** If you had a young woman you cared deeply about entering the workforce today, what single piece of advice would you have for her?

**A:** Make sure that you like the job you are going to do, and the people you are working with! I didn't use the word love, for a reason. Sometimes, when we make a decision that is not exactly what we thought we were signing up for, it's best to stick with the decision, and make the best of it. Don't look back; doing so doesn't change anything.

All jobs have pieces that we may not love, but it is important to make sure that the job you're doing is always something you want to be involved in and associated with. Although it often takes many years to fully understand why you are somewhere, and why you are attracted to that type of work, the answers will always come with time.

**Q:** What advice do you have for building self-confidence?

**A:** I have three boys. I have learned that, as a parent, you build their self-esteem by making sure to recognize and acknowledge when your child has done something good. Sometimes, we tend to emphasize the negative, and things only get our attention when the child has done something we don't like. Over the years, I've learned that it is far more effective to focus on making sure that your child is proud of himself or herself. Instead of saying you are proud of your children, make sure they are proud of themselves. After all, they won't always have Mom or Dad around to fill that need for reassurance.

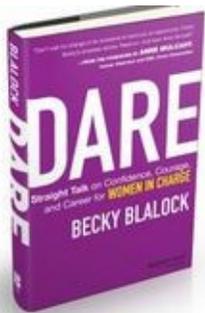
Some helpful conversations often start with: “Aren't you proud of what you've been able to (*cont.*)

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**A:** (cont.) accomplish?” or “Aren’t you proud that you followed through and didn’t give up?” It’s important to build a culture that does not always look to other people to give recognition. You need to be able to find that recognition in yourself.

**Q:** How did you make the leap from middle to senior executive leadership in your company?

**A:** In my career, I've had to turn down promotions. I remember once being offered a position I had always wanted. It was a jump from middle to senior management. All weekend long, I wrestled with the decision. My husband and I had a tough time deciding if we should move the family across the country so I could accept the promotion. In the end, we decided it was both too much work to move and not the right fit. When I declined the offer on Monday morning, I got a call two hours later from the hiring team offering me the very same job in our hometown. This experience taught me that you sometimes need to know when to walk away from something and to be certain that the career moves you make are truly good for you and your family. Sometimes, even if the position and the title seem right, you just know deep down that it isn't the right thing to do. Don't sacrifice your happiness. Nothing is worth that.



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