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### **School of Hard Knocks:** **Listen With Both Ears**

The construction industry is not an easy place to pick a career. It is full of challenges and opportunities. I have noticed; however, the stormwater compliance industry is very small. I had a great mentor in my career who had a plaque hanging in his office. It said, "Be careful of the toes you step on today - they may be connected to the behind you will have to kiss tomorrow." When I first read this plaque I found it a bit juvenile and drew a conclusion that I had a higher level of integrity. Boy, was I wrong.

As my career progressed I think I discovered a deeper meaning. Initially I thought this was addressing getting the next sale, or patronizing a customer, this could not be further from the truth. The saying, as it has applied in my career, has very little to do with the customer and more to do with yourself. We are quick to draw opinions in this business. We like to think we have tried everything and done everything at least once. Someone comes up with a more effective solution, and immediately we want to tell them about how that was tried once in 1967 and it didn't work. Well, guess what? The generation behind us is smarter, more efficient, and way more technically skilled than we are. They have solutions that seem so simple we overlooked them in all of our technical wisdom.

The meaning of the plaque to me now surrounds listening to those who propose solutions without judgment or pre-disposed bias. Integrating change rather than fighting anything new, and listening with both ears while shutting the one mouth you have. Environmental compliance is not an easy task. It comes with complex problems and even more complex solutions. One thing is certain; however, the industry is not that big nor that advanced that we cannot accept new ideas, thoughts, or solutions. Without them we are most certainly going to be cast aside. So, be careful the ideas you put down today may indeed be connected to the solutions you may recommend tomorrow...



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