

THE *Actions* WE SHOW, THE *Image* We Share

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I woke up this particular morning in Springfield, Missouri after a night's stay at the Motel 6, you know, the people who "leave the light on for you." There was nothing overwhelmingly unexpected from my stay; a television with basic cable, a remote with a missing battery, and the quiet thrum of highway traffic. My morning routine is just that; I shave with my Gillette razor, "The best a man can get", I brush my teeth with something approved by 4 out of 5 dentists, and finally, I lace up my Puma sneakers – sorry, no nifty slogan here, its all about the *lifestyle*.

Walking out the door, I realize just how much every image, brand, and slogan in my daily life represents something a little more tangible. As that I applies to *me*, I wonder what exactly

it is that the world sees when they look. I throw my bags in the car, close the trunk, and stare directly at the Delta Sigma Phi decal that rests perfectly centered on my rear window. As that applies to *us*, I wonder what exactly it is that the world sees when they look.

Now, I have noticed this decal on more than one occasion, and it has represented many passionate ideals over the years. The day I was initiated it was a symbol of immeasurable prowess that only deserved to be accompanied by loud music and lowered windows. By my senior year these letters became a mixed pantheon derived from some obscure combination of success, failure, and friendship. With each day adding one more tally in the alumnus category, the message seems some-

what more nostalgic, and with that vagueness, somewhat more literal in definition; simply put, the letters are that of an organization, Delta Sigma Phi.

Unlike the images of my morning routine, I am proud that there is something more substantial represented by this decal and organization. With this thought comes a slightly more important detail; that as much as the value of our letters represent who I am, there is further emphasis on how my actions represent the value of who we are. However seemingly irrelevant, the speed I am now driving down the construction zone of Interstate 44, my late night Twitter post at the Motel 6, and the old bid day shirt that is worn during weekly softball games, all tend to send the world a message about Delta Sigma Phi. I guess the point is that this relationship between personal action and outward image is almost always interchangeable; and if we are in the business of being "Better Men," then it is our responsibility to make sure our actions mirror the message.

It is difficult to identify which opinion of Delta Sigma Phi will be derived from our behaviors. We are such an eclectic assortment of fraternity men, and have been since our founding, with everything we exemplify, how could one particular action define an entire brotherhood? In all honesty, a single action will not tell the world about every member of Delta Sigma Phi; however, a single action could tell one person, everything they ever wanted to know.

I pull over to stop for food, check my e-mail, and catch up with friends on Facebook. As I scroll down the list of status updates, I see that someone had a fun weekend, someone lost their job, and someone else apparently didn't care too much for theirs; "Big surprise, my stupid boss is makin me work late again... I really need to get out of this place... ANYONE HIRING?" So, apart from forgetting the "g" in making, there are a couple things here that make me want to pick up my phone, call this guy, and ask him what exactly he is thinking. Social media is a strange thing, and while I haven't fully wrapped my head around all its far-reaching extremities, I have figured out that I probably shouldn't use any public forum as a place to passive aggressively defame my boss, talk about how I was arrested the night before, or pick a fight with my significant other. We all have our less than memorable moments, but the thing to know about proclaiming your introspection through an internet post or picture, is that these "moments" lose their past tense qualification, and will most assuredly root themselves in a more permanent fashion.

Digressions aside, I enter the on-ramp and continue on my way. My thoughts of image and action are brought back to the forefront by a well-known remark on the back of a passing truck, "How am I driving?". The question is probably only answered when the driver slips up and some angered motorist decides to make amends by calling the toll-free number, but I get the feeling that the same call isn't made when the driver changes lanes and allows someone to pass. The connection here is that while good deeds are appreciated, it is usually the one bad mistake that gets noticed.

We have chapters that have committed thousands of hours of service to better their communities, and the reality is that individuals, people like you and me, woke up, dedicated time, effort, and money, to make their world a better place. The blood we have donated will save lives. The trees we have planted will better our environment. And the children we have mentored will view the world differently, all because we cared to act. These great endeavors, however, become quickly overshadowed by the times we fail to fulfill a promise, or act without regard to others. What message are we sending when we show up for class in our Delta Sig sweats, but we fall asleep ten minutes later, or when we raise \$5,000 for M.A.D.D. (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), but our proceeds come from the cover charge at our favorite bar? What is most likely to get noticed here, that we made it to class, or that we fell asleep; that we raised money for a charitable organization, or that we spent all of Wednesday night at the bar? It's been said many times before, but it can be a difficult concept to embrace, this being the simple truth that we are always wearing our letters. We cannot choose when we will act as Delta Sigs, and when we will not; and because the world does not see a distinction between our pledged faith and our followed action, neither should we.

It is amazing how every image, brand, and slogan impacts those who view them. Just as someone expects a certain quality of razor from Gillette, or shoe from Puma, there is a certain expectation in the quality of brand that is Delta Sigma Phi. We are not in the business of making products that people wear or use, but in the furtherance of who people are. Only by our earnest attention to the choices we make, however seemingly inconsequential, will the letters on our shirts, flags, banners, and cars, be synonymous with the better men that comprise our great fraternity.