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The Road To Leadership

Introduction

I appreciate the opportunity and feel honored and humbled to address this distinguished group of Extension educators. The greatest reward of this award is knowing that our Extension agents and specialists are the ones that submitted my application deeming me worthy to receive such an honor. I am proud to be associated with Extension, for what Extension has done in the past, what it is doing now and what it can do in the future. But before we go into the topic that I've selected let me tell you about an experience from the past.

When I was about 16 years old, I was sent one summer day to our dry farm to kill weeds. For those of you who are not familiar with a dry farm, it is a farm where you plant half and leave half fallow to conserve moisture. In Utah, where I was raised, we receive about 12 inches of rain in a good year. Usually we received plenty of snow that would be used for our irrigated crops but for our dry farms up against the side hills, 12 inches of rain would have to suffice. So, I was sent up with the tiller with the crow feet attachments to take out the weeds on the fallow ground.

Everything was going fine until I hit a large area of morning glory. The tiller kept plugging up. The weeds would catch onto the tiller and the crow feet and start piling the soil up in front of the tiller and against the back wheels of the tractor. I had to keep getting down from the tractor and cleaning off the tiller. One of these times after I had just cleaned the tiller and gone a short distance in the morning glory, I glanced back at the tiller just like you're supposed to do "back to the tiller, front to check where I'm going" back to the tiller, I noticed a snake caught up in the tiller, rolling with the soil. I didn't think too much of it, "glad that it was back there" snakes were common in the hills. So I put my eyes forward again. After a short look to the front, I again started to look to the rear. Just as my eyes were even with the right tractor tire, there was the snake with its mouth open coming over the top of the tire. I was frozen in time. The snake continued with the spinning tire to the ground and slithered off into the morning glory. I managed to stop the tractor and thank the Lord that I was still less two fang marks. Then I got angry, and I chased that snake on the tractor through the morning glory. I'm sure if you had been watching this tractor go all over the place, you would have wondered what was going on.

Nevertheless, I finally caught the snake in my front tire. The end of the snake.

What has this story got to do with what I am going to say today? Let me explain. I believe we in Extension have become somewhat complacent. I believe we are busy getting the weeds, and we haven't heeded the snake in back of the tractor. We are managing, but are we leading? Do we have the vision necessary to thrive in this new Land Grant world in which we find ourselves? Does the U.S. World and News report rule your university or are we helping our universities see another road as important and viable? As Henry Kissinger said, "If you do not know where you are going, every road will get you nowhere." Do we know which road to leadership we are taking? Yogi Berra made a viable statement when he said, "If you come to a fork in the road, take it."

A number of recent documents could help our decision about which road to take. We should heed the following reports concerning Land Grant schools.

The Kellogg Report "Returning to our Roots: "By engagement, we refer to institutions that have redesigned their teaching, research, and extension and service functions to become even more sympathetically and productively involved with their communities."

Embedded in the engagement ideal is a commitment to sharing and reciprocity. By engagement the Commission envisions partnerships, two-way streets defined by mutual respect among the partners for what each brings to the table."

Land-Grant Universities and Extension: Renegotiating or Abandoning a Social

Contract by George McDowell: "University Engagement Must Involve All of the University.

The larger challenge to the future of the university and to extension as it seeks to play a role as educator, of both the university "to the problems of people" and of people in their communities, will be the extent to which the total university is challenged and engaged."

In ECOP Report: The Extension System: A Vision for the 21st Century: The 21st

Century Committee envisions that Extension will build upon its existing capacity, credibility and network of local offices to become an integral part of university-wide engagement. The report further states: "If Extension is to thrive; it must understand and adjust to rapid changes and emerging challenges." Leadership within Extension will be affected by these changes/challenges. ECOP's 21st Century Report made recommendations for dealing with those challenges. They were mostly under the leadership subtitles and are listed below:

- 1) Evaluate administrative structure to facilitate total engagement. Examine skills regarding modeling engagement.
- 2) Extension leadership participates in the highest levels of university-wide decision making.

- 3) Extension administrators participate in change and leadership training.
- 4) Extension administrators are expected to facilitate multi-state, regional and national cooperation.
- 5) Develop hiring, compensation and professional development strategies that attract, retain and train employees with concepts and skills in self-directed learning: communication, leadership, conflict, change, ambiguity, multi-cultural audiences, information technology, learning methods, etc.
- 6) Employees should spend a minimum of 10% of their time in training and professional development.
- 7) Develop volunteer recruitment, training and retention strategies reflecting a broad engagement mission.
- 8) Establish processes for forecasting emerging issues that affect clientele and communities.
- 9) Extension leadership should be competent and committed to:
 - a. shared decision making with the university-wide engagement;
 - b. integration of engagement, discovery and learning.
- 10) Extension should empower, encourage and support proactive decision making at levels most relevant to stated problems and by individuals who have the most relevant information.

To accomplish these goals will require forward thinking leadership. I have added a few of my own suggestions below to make sure we still have engaged land grant universities. The right road to take requires a little Leadership 101. Here are a few of my suggestions taken from Bennis, Ulrich, and Covey.

What is leadership?

"Leadership is a fundamental and profound engagement with the world and the human condition." Warren Bennis

"Leadership is competency X results." David Ulrich

Efficiency vs. Effectiveness

Efficiency is doing things right. Effectiveness is doing the right things. Quoting Stephen Covey, "Management is a bottom line focus: How can I best accomplish certain things?"

Leadership deals with the top line: What are the things I want to accomplish? In the words of both Peter Drucker and Warren Bennis, "Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things." Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall.

You can quickly grasp the important difference between the two if you envision a group of producers cutting their way through the jungle with machetes. They're the producers, the problem solvers. They're cutting through the undergrowth, clearing it out.

The managers are behind them, sharpening their machetes, writing policy and procedure manuals, holding muscle development programs, bringing in improved technologies and setting up working schedules and compensation programs for machete wielders.

A Leadership Model

- * High Administrator Complete Leader
- * Low Abdicrat Dreamer
- * Low High
- * Leading
- * Managing

The leader is the one who climbs the tallest tree, surveys the entire situation, and yells, "Wrong jungle!"

But how do the busy, efficient producers and managers often respond? "Shut up! We're making progress." As individuals, groups, and businesses, we're often so busy cutting through the undergrowth we don't even realize we're in the wrong jungle. The rapidly changing environment in which we live makes effective leadership more critical than it has ever been "in every aspect of independent and interdependent life."

Here are some other thoughts on leadership.

Pat Borich states that "Two things are critically important to helping us accomplish the goals of a new Cooperative Extension System. An increased budget (marketing) and an improved product (leadership)." I believe the last is the first in this case. Leadership is critical.

Leadership is even more critical today because of the constant change in which we find ourselves. I have used the phrase from Peter Vail, *Permanent White Water*, "No sooner do you begin to digest one change than another one comes along to keep things unstuck. In fact, there are usually lots of changes going on at once. The feeling is one of continuous upset and chaos."

Ralph Siu has also captured this concept in the idea of what he calls "Chinese baseball." The mythical game of Chinese baseball is just like American baseball in all respects save one: in

Chinese baseball, whenever the ball is in the air, anyone is allowed to pick up any base and move it " anywhere! So what type of leader is demanded for this constant changing scene?

Leaders now and in the future in extension and other fields have to be as Muller, a researcher in leadership, suggests, "trumpets that do not give an uncertain sound." In this age, decisions are going to have to happen faster. Leaders are and will continue to be forced to see what needs to be done and adjust quickly. This is the "permanent white water" of which I just spoke.

What else will be required of this new type of leader?

A leader is one who sets and demands standards of excellence. They have to talk about these standards repeatedly with employees. For example, I have pushed the initiative for our field staff to attain full professor status. I believe that this is setting a standard of excellence.

These people are capable. I believe that they, with our district and state staff, are among the finest teachers at this university. But, as extension personnel know, I continue to encourage our state, district and field staff to document their teaching, using the effective teaching material that we have. We should be the best teachers!

The right leader for the future will be the leader who develops ways for recognizing excellence at all levels of the organization. Avoid the temptation to champion only those individuals we consider to be heroes. Morita, head of Sony, put it this way: "The U.S. approach is to concentrate on the person who hit the home run - the Japanese approach, on the other hand is to nurture the people who can bunt and place a single, the ones who give breadth and depth to a whole team."

The right kind of leader for the future is one who has vision. Quoting Muller again:

"The leader will need to be a revolutionist, an innovator, not an evolutionist or traditionalist."

This leader will be one who is not afraid to fail and teaches subordinates the same.

Thomas Edison had 25,000 failures before he invented the storage battery. General Connor believed in a young soldier named Dwight Eisenhower. After the young man achieved an academic placement that was less than sterling in high school and West Point, General Connor took him under his wing. He encouraged him to try again. Dwight worked hard and got a chance to go to the Command and General Staff School at Fort

Leavenworth, one of the most competitive schools in the army. Eisenhower took advantage of the opportunity and graduated first in his class. The rest is history.

We will need leaders who are willing to roll up their sleeves. Sometimes we need to build the house, too. We need to lay the bricks in place, not always laying out the blueprint. I firmly believe that to be a great leader one must understand the principles of management as well as leadership. I believe to be a successful leader you also better understand how to be a successful manager, to lay the bricks once in a while.

Jack Welch, former CEO of GE's Competencies include:

- *Â Vision -Â Proverb 29:18
- *Â Accountability - Allow ourselves to be evaluated
- *Â Building High Performance Teams- Build leadership teams in each program area
- *Â Inspiring Excellence - (Kaizen " continual striving for self improvement)Ãçâ,¬â€• devine discontent
- *Â Empowering Others - Get the right people and get out of the way
- *Â Stimulating Change - Constant white water
- *Â Applying Intellect - Allow your people to think
- *Â Maximizing Communication Listening is the key

"Jim Collins in his book Good to Great suggested that great leaders seem to have come from Mars. Self-effacing, quiet, reserved, even shy-- these leaders are a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will. They are more like Lincoln and Socrates than Patton or Caesar."

He went on to say that great leaders started by first "getting the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats " and then the y figured out where to drive it. The old adage "people are your most important asset "turns out to be incomplete. People are not your most important asset. The right people are."

Bennis and Thomas in their recent Harvard Business Review article stated the following about the essentials of leadership:

"We believe that great leaders possess four essential skills "First is the ability to engage others in shared meaning." They used the example of Sidney Harman, CEO of Harman International, an audio components company, who dived into a chaotic work environment to mobilize employees around an entirely new approach to management. Second is the distinctive and compelling voice. They gave the example of Jack Coleman, president of Haverford College in Pennsylvania during the Vietnam War. Protesting students wanted to burn the flag and football players were going to stop them. He calmly suggested the protesting students take down the flag and wash it as a sign of "cleansing" then put it back up.

Third is a sense of integrity, including a strong sense of values. Douglas Leland helps us here by asking questions:

- * Is your choice legal?
- * Could you tell your parents, mate, and children about your activities?
- * Would you feel comfortable reading about your actions on the front page of the local newspaper?
- * Could you live with your decision and look at yourself in the mirror every morning?
- * Are you comfortable with what your decision says about you as a person?

Rakesh Khurana also helps us understand the role of ethics in a leader in his article in the

Harvard Business Review. He talks about the concern with relying on charismatic leaders when he stated: "Enron's board of directors also bent to the will of its charismatic leader when it agreed to suspend its code of ethics to allow top executives to participate in the off-balance-sheet partnerships. Yet almost to the bitter end, Skilling wowed investors and analysts at gatherings that one analyst likened to revival meetings. As Skilling's example illustrates, charismatic leaders reject limits to their scope and authority. They rebel against all checks on their power and dismiss the rules and norms that apply to others. As a result, they can exploit the irrational desires of their followers. That's because following a charismatic leader involves more than merely acknowledging his skills " it requires full surrender."

Bennis and Thomas continue "By far the most critical skill of the four is"adaptive capacity.' This is, in essence, applied creativity - an almost magical ability to transcend adversity, with all its attendant stresses, and to emerge stronger than before. It's composed of two primary qualities: the ability to grasp context, and hardiness. The ability to grasp context implies an ability to weigh a welter of factors, ranging from how very different groups of people will interpret a gesture to being able to put a situation in perspective."

Nelson Mandela is a wonderful example of being stronger after his incarceration.

I would feel like I have not given you my "continuing to develop" leadership formula if I did not include a quote from another book I currently read. Mark McCormack, the author of the #1 bestseller, What They Don't Teach You at Harvard Business School has written another book called Never Wrestle With A Pig. I like a quote from this book, "Technology is wonderful and seductive. But it's also insidious, especially if it chips away at our appreciation of the value of constant human contact " because without these moments of face-to-face exchanges, we lose a vital regulator in our lives. Human contact controls our behavior. Remove it and people's baser instincts appear "Remember this as you march into the future with your laptops, Palm Pilots, and digital communicators. No matter how tempting it is to hide behind technology, there's more to be gained by looking into another person's face than staring at a screen." A very

important aspect of leadership, I believe, along with McCormack, is constant human contact.

Conclusion

In closing, we need to lead this land grant change to greater engagement, not stand idly by. We need to use new models of proactive, persuasive leadership, and we need to be on the right road of leadership.

A leader is best when people barely know that he exists, not so good when people obey and acclaim him, worse when they despise him. Fail to honor people, they fail to honor you. But of a good leader, who talks little when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say, we did this ourselves. Lao Tzu

"The vision must be followed by the venture. It is not enough to stare up the steps " we must step up the stairs.-• Vance Havner

In other words, let us quit being complacent, let's get ourselves off the tractor and get rid of the snakes!!

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