

LEADERSHIP ESSENTIALS



A NWS SR Newsletter promoting BLAST and the principles of leadership

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LISTEN AND LEARN

BY SHAWN ZELLER,
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A couple of years ago, University of Michigan business school professor Noel Tichy watched a platoon of Army Rangers raid a terrorist camp. The enemy was heavily armed and had chemical weapons, and the Rangers were caught off guard when they realized that the terrorists had night-vision goggles and were hiding behind a fence of triple-strand razor wire. Then the radios failed. It was chaos.

The raid, staged at Fort Benning, Ga., was only a simulation. But what struck Tichy most was the after-action review. Defying all his preconceived notions about military hierarchy, right after the simulation ended, at 1 a.m., everyone sat down, from generals to privates, "all stripes off, [for] honest, candid feedback," says Tichy. The point of the exercise wasn't "to become perfect in choreographed maneuvers," but rather to "season soldiers to make split-second



Army Rangers in Training

decisions in difficult circumstances." The after-action reviews, Tichy writes in his book, *The Cycle of Leadership* (HarperCollins, 2002), "are designed to develop functioning leaders, able to accomplish their missions despite the obstacles, rather than lock-step martinets."

The Rangers' reviews exemplify the "virtuous teaching cycle," a concept that Tichy - who once ran General Electric Co.'s executive academy - touts in his book. The virtuous teaching cycle exists when "you reduce hierarchy and say this is all about learning," he explains. Tichy

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR, JODY JAMES

I was reminded the other day why all of this leadership training is so important. My wife and I were picking up our two sons from their local Cub Scout meeting. We were both tired after a long day of work, and serving as a taxi service for our kids. After the meeting, we commented on the positive aspects of the scouting program and how much our two boys enjoyed it. We both agreed that our sons were

especially enjoying scouting this year, and that fact was primarily due to the leadership and caring exhibited by a couple of parents who guide the boys with a sense of purpose.

I was reminded of a quote by renowned author and leadership guru John Maxwell—"Everything rises and falls on leadership". That's especially true with Pack 511.

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“The virtuous teaching cycle exists when ‘you reduce hierarchy and say this is all about learning’....”

argues that top-down leadership styles don't work in either the military or business world, and leaders must recognize that they, too, can learn by listening to employees. The Special Forces' transformation into a teaching organization, Tichy says, has advanced the Rangers from a purely warfighting function to an all-purpose nation-building force. In countries such as Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq, Special Forces have had to fight the enemy and also work with communities to rebuild schools, infrastructure and government.

Much of Tichy's book focuses on his work with General Electric and former CEO Jack Welch's extensive, personal investment in teaching - and learning from - his executives. Tichy holds out GE as an example that any organization, including government, should follow. GE requires top executives to complete two-year turns at its academy in Ossining, N.Y. These "black belts," as the company calls them, teach quality control techniques and gather ideas from employees on improving processes. But Tichy gets frustrated when he hears talk about government emulating private industry. "Ninety percent of businesses are run like crap," he says. "You want to run like the Olympic runners, not the average."

And government has developed plenty of good leaders on its own. Tichy profiles one, retired Gen. Wayne Downing, former head of Special Forces, whom he credits with becoming more autonomous and reacting quickly to changing circumstances without guidance from above. Downing recognized that the terrorist threats of the 21st century require not "Rambos" but "team-oriented" soldiers who not only can fight wars, but work on economic development, and health-care and democracy-building projects, Tichy says.

He credits Downing with rejecting the hierarchical, structured teaching techniques that he learned early in his own military career. "Command-and-control hierarchies, with their cram-down, one-way communication create vicious cycles in which information is hidden, gamesmanship is raised to a high art and trust is destroyed." By contrast, Downing reached out to his soldiers, asking them what they were finding during their missions and what skills they needed to succeed.

Facing a retirement wave among its top executives, government has a challenge ahead in filling the void. But Tichy believes that leaders are made, not born. Today's government leaders must keep the pipeline flowing. "The worst people in the world to help develop leaders are professors and consultants," he says. "It is your job as the leader."

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WESTERN REGION GETS A LIFT WITH LEADERSHIP TRAINING

By Jim Campbell, Deputy Regional Director,
WRH, Salt Lake City

Western Region held its very first Leadership and Innovation for Tomorrow (LIFT) class during the week of September 19, 2004 in Portland, Oregon. The class was patterned after Southern Region's BLAST program, and it was an outstanding example of two regions working together to produce a quality product. I had the privilege of attending the BLAST class in February along with Rob Hartman, HIC from Sacramento. The great assistance we received from Gary Grice (retired), Steve Cooper, and the Southern Region facilitators and the opportunity to attend the BLAST class gave us a head start in developing a program for Western Region.

Our first class was composed of a broad cross section within the region. Hydrologists, Meteorologists, Science Operations Officers, and Warning Coordination Meteorologists made up much of the class. In addition, an Administrative Support Assistant, an electronics technician, and a hydro-meteorological technician participated. The diversity added a great deal to the class.

Similar to BLAST it was a very busy week. We started with Norma Barr doing the MBTI instrument, and we invited both Gary Grice and Norman Bowles to speak with the class. Our facilitators taught segments on the Foundation of Good Leadership, The Leader in a Rapidly Changing World, Developing and Communicating a Vision, Servant Leader, Power through Empowerment, Effective Communication, and Innovative Thinking and the Value of a Network.

Our field trip took us to a community action network in the city of Portland and a nearby county to view first hand how strong leadership in local government came together to provide community services to those in need. We visited a home that provides shelter for families in transition from a homeless environment to finding a job and affordable housing.

Even though it was a tiring week, the class worked extra hard to come up with their own vision statement that will guide them in the future.

Their enthusiasm was infectious, and the facilitators found the experience rewarding and energizing. At the end of the week, each class participant was given a mentor, and part of the last day was devoted to the mentors and protégés getting to know each other. It was an unexpected surprise that the class gave each of the facilitators a certificate of thanks signed by each student.

The class now begins their leadership journey. The mentors and protégés will get together later this year to establish a LIFT Development Plan (LDP) for each participant. The plan will partially be based on a 360 degree feedback instrument which they will share with their supervisor and several peers. Based on the feedback and the LDP, each of the participants will be provided funds for training to work on areas they can improve upon. They will also have the opportunity to work on a project either as a class or individually. Bi-monthly book reviews will be held similar to the BLAST program, and each participant will be given a subscription to the Harvard Business Review. Next year, the class will come together again to participate in a workshop on the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.

Our first class was an inspiring event for both the class members and the facilitators. People left on Friday tired but also rejuvenated and ready to exercise some of their new leadership skills. We will continue to have LIFT classes, and like Southern Region, our goal is to encourage a leadership culture at all levels of the organization. I again want to reiterate the tremendous support we received from Southern Region to get our program started. Without your help, the road would have been much longer.



Salt Lake City, home of NWS Western Region HQ

BLAST: The Evolution of a Regional Leadership Training Program

By Steven Cooper, Deputy Regional Director, SRH

“We...see good leadership principles being applied across the region...”



The concept of a regional leadership development program grew from the NWS new national leadership program call SLPP (Senior Leadership Potential Program). As a participant in the first (and only one thus far) program that began in the early summer of 2000, Gary Grice and I began tossing around the idea of a regionally developed program that would provide exposure to leadership ideas. We took the best practices from the SLPP and built upon them for BLAST.

Realizing, financially and logistically, we could only bring a few people together into the week long “formal” workshop, we included local BLAST programs to be developed and administered at the Field offices. Another part of the program included developing a BLAST Library that anyone within the region could review on-line and check out the books or tapes. These materials can be viewed at www.srh.weather.gov/srh/blast/library.htm

The development of the workshop involved a series of brainstorming sessions, development of the topics, and facilitator coaching. A “dry run” by the facilitators several months before the first BLAST workshop provided invaluable insight of how the most effective presentation/facilitation should transpire.

A critical part of the workshop is the feedback on each session and on the participants’ overall view of the week. This information has led to

a better program each of the following years. For example, the materials from BLAST 2001 workshop comprised only about 30% of those used in the BLAST 2004 workshop.

In addition to the changes in the materials presented during the workshop, several new facilitators have joined the group. The facilitators have become quite efficient at helping the participants gain a good understanding of good leadership principles in the short time they have during the workshop.

We are seeing and hearing how BLAST and good leadership concepts are spreading. Feedback from the BLAST 2004 class included such comments as “have had exposure to this topic in our local BLAST program.” We also see good leadership principles being applied across the region from individuals holding various positions throughout their work unit.

The Western Region Headquarters has been working on their own leadership program. They have reviewed and worked with the leaders of BLAST and are building upon the best practices and lessons learned.

While quantifiable data showing the benefits are hard to show, anecdotal information overwhelmingly supports that BLAST and good leadership principles are beneficial to the individuals and offices willing to be open to new ideas and concepts.

“Every day you may make progress. Every step may be fruitful. Yet there will stretch out before you an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to the end of the journey. But this, so far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the climb.”

Sir Winston Churchill



BLAST PROJECTS— CUSTOMER SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP-

By Larry Vannozi, MIC
WFO Nashville, TN

What do school textbook covers, weather-related trading cards, brochures about the NWS, and a regional media convention have in common? Any guesses? Well, they're part of a group of projects dreamed up by the 2002 BLAST class to increase NWS visibility.

Toward the end of our week-long BLAST course in Atlanta, I joined my 11 classmates for an evening brain-storming session about how to increase NWS visibility. Everyone knew we had a visibility problem, so we decided to try to do something about it. Around the same time, we were very fortunate to encounter Norman Bowles, then Director of the FAA Logistics Center. He told us that an effective way for our class to stay together as a team would be to do a project together. That solidified our resolve and so at the end of the brain-storming session, we decided to stay together as a group by working on projects to increase NWS visibility.

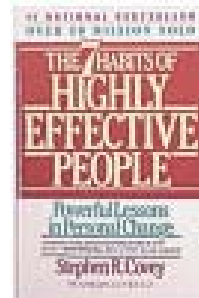
By now you might be thinking, "Okay; sounds like a worthy goal, but what's all this got to do with leadership?" Well, as time went by following the Atlanta BLAST course, an idea evolved during our periodic conference calls to recruit others to be part of teams organized for each of the projects. We felt that involving more people would allow the entire group to do a bigger and better job on each project while simultaneously giving us leadership experience

(the class members would be team leaders for each project). We sent an e-mail recruitment note to all Southern Region employees and had over 60 people decide to join the effort.

One of the projects that I suggested was the school textbook cover. The idea was to have a weather safety related cover that students could use to protect their books. We wanted it to be much better than the 'ol paper bag covers of years gone by. The idea wasn't original; WFO Birmingham MIC Ken Graham originally proposed the project. Presently, we have a very neat cover design that concentrates on lightning safety yet is presented in a very hip and youthful design. Of course, it also includes the NWS logo and our web address in multiple places. Once we nail down a partner/sponsor, we'll move ahead with distribution.

It has been two years since the class decided to carry out our big idea. Some of the projects have probably gone better than we expected while others have encountered stubborn obstacles. The important point is that dozens of people across the NWS Southern Region are banding together in teams, gaining leadership experience, and accomplishing projects to enhance NWS visibility.

“...we decided to stay together as a group by working on projects to increase NWS visibility.”



Check out this book and many more good leadership titles available in the Southern Region BLAST Leadership Library

<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/srh/blast/library.htm>

Congratulations to the newest Regional BLAST Class BLAST 2005!

Peter Banacos	Forecaster, SPC, Norman, OK
Jason Burks	ITO, WFO Huntsville, AL
Diane Cooper	Hydrologist, ABRFC, Tulsa, OK
Tim Garner	Lead Forecaster, SMG, Houston, TX
Bryan Henry	Forecaster, WFO Jackson, MS
Darone Jones	Forecaster, WFO Birmingham, AL
Kent Kuyper	Sr.Forecaster, WFO Lake Charles, LA
Matthew Lorentson	Sr.Forecaster, WFO Brownsville, TX
Eric Martello	Sr.Forecaster, WFO Fort Worth, TX
Ronald Morales	SOO, WFO Corpus Christi, TX
Jennifer McNatt	Forecaster, WFO Tallahassee, FL
Daniel Noah	WCM, WFO Tampa, FL
Timothy Oram	Tech. Dev. Met., SMG, Houston, TX
Jason Wright	WCM, WFO Birmingham, AL





See the **BLAST** section
of the Southern Region
website at
[www.srh.noaa.gov/srh/
blast/blast.htm](http://www.srh.noaa.gov/srh/blast/blast.htm)

If you are interested in
contributing to this
newsletter, please contact a
member of the
BLAST Newsletter team,
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LOCAL BLAST HIGHLIGHT WFO BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA



“Listening to other people talk about leadership reminded our group that we can learn a lot from people with a different perspective on things.”

Variety is the theme for local BLAST efforts in Birmingham

Local BLAST meetings at WFO Birmingham, Alabama have been put on hold for a few months, thanks to the recent hurricanes in the southeastern states. According to Faith Borden, Senior Forecaster at WFO BHM, having variety during local BLAST meetings helps to promote diverse ways of promoting leadership. The philosophy behind the local BLAST meetings at BHM is one of “less theory, more action.”

While the Birmingham BLAST team makes an attempt to get together monthly, a different presenter and different topic is shared with the group. According to Borden, this leaves it open to each individual to choose the topic where they have the most interest. Not only does this give variety to the types of meetings, but the different personality styles and presentations keep the meetings from getting predictable.

As an example of the diversity of topics at Birmingham, Faith had the mayor of Calera, Alabama speak to the group, where he spoke about what it was like to lead the fastest growing city in Alabama, and what leadership principles he feels is necessary to keep up with everything. Lastly, during the month of August, the Birmingham team participated with the SR BLAST class of 2003 conference call.

Birmingham MIC, Ken Graham said he liked the approach of having leaders from other government entities speak to the class. He said “This gave our staff a chance to look outside of the WFO walls. Listening to other people talk about leadership reminded our group that we can learn a lot from people with a different perspective on things.”

LEADERSHIP ESSENTIALS

**This newsletter brought to you by the 2004 BLAST Class,
and the BLAST Newsletter Team**

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