

LEADERSHIP ESSENTIALS

A NWS SR Newsletter promoting BLAST and the principles of leadership



Volume II, Issue 3, November, 2005

In This Issue...

- Is Your Leadership Style In Tune With The Times?
- From Jefferson to Katrina
- Avoiding Groupthink
- 2006 BLAST Class

IS YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE IN TUNE WITH THE TIMES?

By Douglas B. Richardson

Senior executives often describe their personal style in forceful terms: "What you see is what you get," "I'm not gonna change the way I behave just to make other people comfortable," "You don't see me indulging in all that political game-playing," or "This is one leopard that won't change its spots."

Their declarations are meant to convey integrity and a commitment to the truth. Instead, they reveal an inflexible or insensitive leadership style that's out of step with the times.

The formula for executive success has traditionally been exceptional cognitive intelligence and expertise coupled with a steely personal style. Successful leaders were calm, cool and consistent. They were rational, dispassionate, analytical and objective. They didn't go in for "situation ethics." They didn't pander, bootlick, vacillate, go with the flow or act like chameleons to build rapport. Above all, they didn't display emotion, sensitivity, vulnerability or other touchy-feely stuff.

But IQ and expertise are no longer considered the best predictors of leadership effectiveness and success. Emotional intelligence or "EQ" –

the ability to understand and manage ourselves and our interpersonal relationships skillfully – is considered a better leadership differentiator than raw smarts or technical virtuosity.

Daniel Goleman, author of "Emotional Intelligence" (Bantam, 1995) and "Working with Emotional Intelligence" (Bantam, 1998), has emerged as an authority in EQ. He makes the

Continued on Page 2



LEADERSHIP - FROM JEFFERSON TO KATRINA

By Jon Zeitler, SOO

WFO Austin/San Antonio, TX

I find it worth the time to look for leadership lessons in nearly anything I read. Randy Cohen of the *New York Times Magazine* wrote a nice article (see page 7) this past July about advice Thomas Jefferson had given his grandson Francis Eppes (founder of the Florida State University). In short,

Jefferson cautioned Eppes on secrecy, suggesting that thoughts should be publicly stated and subjected to scrutiny to be worthwhile. Cohen expounds on this theme in the rest of the piece, but the context and advice also can be applied to leadership.

The foundation of leadership is personal growth and change, which authors such as Covey and Hunter, and the Southern Region BLAST program address at length.

Continued on Page 4

IS YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE IN TUNE WITH THE TIMES?

Continued From Page 1

case that sensitivity to emotional states (one's own and others') and effective interpersonal skills are the most essential leadership "competencies." Philadelphia executive coach Dr. Karol Wasylyshyn has coined a catchy acronym for the four major EQ competencies: "SO SMART." It stands for:

1. **Self Observation**/awareness;
2. **Self Management**;
3. **Attunement** (to other peoples' emotions); and
4. **Relationship Traction** (that is, interpersonal and social skills).

Combining Head and Heart

EQ doesn't mean being or acting more emotional. It describes the ability to combine rational and subjective factors – head and heart, thinking and feeling – in our perceptions and actions.

A variety of personality inventories, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, DISC, FIRO-B and Birkman, have shown that while growing up, each of us develops a stable and comfortable "operative style." This "default setting" serves as the set of lenses and filters through which we perceive reality and frame our actions. By and large, one's operative style doesn't change much after the early 20s; it's rare for anyone to undergo a spontaneous personality transplant in mid-life or mid-career.

Mr. Goleman's research shows that these operative styles tend to coalesce into six fundamental leadership styles:

- Coercive ("Do what I say"),
- Authoritative ("I'll show you the way to the promised land"),
- Democratic ("What do y'all think?"),
- Coaching ("Here, try it this way"),
- Affiliative ("We're all in this together") and
- Pace setting ("Just watch how I do it").

Many leaders tend to lock into the leadership style that's most comfortable for them. They transmit this as: "This is the way I do things."

No longer is this monolithic approach considered the best recipe for success. Effective leaders can adapt to fit varying situations and the personal needs and styles of others. They often blend aspects of four or five different leadership styles. "Many studies have shown that the more styles a leader exhibits, the better," says Mr. Goleman. "Such leaders don't mechanically match their style to fit a checklist of situations – they are far more fluid...They are exquisitely sensitive to the impact they are having on others and seamlessly adjust their style to get the best results."

Make a Style Change

EQ advocates believe that flexibility and fluidity can be learned, with a couple of caveats. First, like learning to throw a split-fingered fastball or mastering conversational Chinese, such self-development can be hard work. It's not simply a matter of deciding to read some books on personality type and adopt a new leadership persona. Such growth requires a constant – and often uncomfortable – mindfulness. It requires setting clear developmental goals, conscious focus and practice and the ability to solicit and accept feedback. New styles and patterns don't take hold until their usefulness and comfort feel greater than the prior style they replace. Relapses are common, frustration frequent.

Second, there are limits to how much change is possible. While anyone can learn to be more highly attuned to others' styles and emotions, one can't necessarily realign deep-seated behavioral habits and attitudes without seeming artificial, superficial or self-conscious. Autonomous people can appear decidedly uncomfortable if asked to join and collaborate. Visionaries can develop

“...like learning to throw a split-fingered fastball or mastering conversational Chinese, such self-development can be hard work.”

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IS YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE IN TUNE WITH THE TIMES?

Continued From Page 2



severe mind-cramp if asked to sweat the details of implementation.

Stability or security-oriented people can go bonkers if thrown into constant chaos. It's hard for warm people to appear cold and for cold people to appear warm – perhaps not for 15 minutes, but probably for 15 days and certainly for 15 months.

This doesn't mean we can't communicate understanding and acceptance of others' needs and styles. As the SO SMART acronym suggests, EQ builds on two distinct types of competencies: 1) awareness of our own and others' emotional states (which some people call empathy and others call sympathy); and 2) managing our interpersonal behaviors. Even if we can't orchestrate wholesale revisions in our behaviors, it's always possible to communicate awareness of how our "default settings" may affect others. Displaying such self-awareness can reduce all kinds of interpersonal disconnects.

An Engineer Loosens Up

Consider a brilliant Norwegian-born systems engineer. As part of an executive-coaching program, he received candid "360" feedback from superiors, peers and subordinates. He learned that his team presentations were "catastrophically boring" and his incredible thoroughness was regarded as "fussy," "obstructive," "risk-averse," "deal-breaking," and even "arrogant." Try as he might, the engineer couldn't deliver a punch line or cut to the chase. Rather than announce his decisions as team leader, he had to explain why he reached them. Feeling his opinionated mind was always made up, team members stopped trying to offer information or they quit.

After planning and rehearsing with his coach, the engineer surprised staffers at a meeting one day:

I have become aware that there are times when my natural, hyper-rational style is screwing us all up. I can see that my tendency to explain everything, elaborate on details, review all contingencies and explain all aspects of my decision-making process can make my presentations drag on and put people to sleep.

I guess this makes me seem more cautious and less excited about a project than I really am. I realize I am very tightly wrapped. Given my upbringing, I probably never will seem as spontaneous and upbeat as some of you. On the basis of my style, some of you justifiably – but incorrectly – feel that I think I'm smarter than or superior to you, that I patronize you. Some people have a speech impediment. I guess I have a style impediment.

Look, friends, this isn't my intention. But my intentions aren't the point. Your actions are driven by how you perceive my style. I want you to know that when I fall into those behaviors, it's OK for you to let me know the effect it's having on you. Giving me feedback about my quirks isn't going to get you in trouble. So even if I do have a hard time loosening up, at least we can try to ensure your point of view is heard.

This speech didn't change things overnight. But at the following staff meeting, he appeared in a T-shirt with a photo of a mummy and the words, "Tightly Wrapped." That broke some ice. The next week, he wore a T-shirt that said, "Garrison Keillor Understands Me." The third week's T-shirt said, "Py Yiminy, dat's some spicey meatball!"

Subsequent coaching taught him to gauge colleagues' reactions, often lightly: "Have I beaten this horse to death yet?" "Anybody want some more detail?" "Wait! Wait! I just felt a flicker of emotion for a second!" His delivery wasn't as colorful as Robin Williams's but his team saw he was trying and began to try harder, too.

Not incidentally, and without realizing it, the engineer began to listen better. He appeared more comfortable in his own skin. Six months later, when a new hire asked a team member what working for him was like, she was told, "What you see isn't what you get. He's real different once you get to know him. He says he's got a 'style impediment,' but don't feel you have to back off. He likes it when you push back. In fact, he's the best manager I ever had."



LEADERSHIP - FROM JEFFERSON TO KATRINA

Continued from Page 1

“...to lead effectively, one should discuss ideas with others and subject them to scrutiny. “



That is only natural, as one must first develop leadership ability, and second, be able to apply it. This individual leadership ability works very well for small groups, but loses effectiveness as the group gets larger. Authors such as Bethune bring this aspect to light in describing that leaders at many levels are necessary for large enterprises to change and grow. In other words, how is leadership done by a group, where there are different organizational levels, missions, and resources? One of the biggest lessons I learned from the BLAST program was that leadership to solve problems always benefits from group discussion, and generally from group action. It was not a lesson directly taught as part of the program, but stemmed more from our bonding as a BLAST class and the class exercises and discussions.

This is where Jefferson’s advice can be applied; to lead effectively; one should discuss ideas with others and subject them to scrutiny. That does not mean one must do what others say, or attempt a compromise solution that does not solve the problem. However, getting the right kind of advice or feedback enhances understanding of the problem, especially helping to cover blind spots that every person has. The real danger is considering ideas in isolation, where assumptions are untested and loss of focus on the core issue is very easy. I have developed a core group of people at various levels within and outside of the NWS for whom I present problems I face. Sometimes, simply talking out the problem with them helps clarify understanding of the problem and the best solution – even with no input from them. Other times, the

back and forth of discussion results in a collaborative solution. There are also cases where their experience with the same or a similar problem provides a ready-made solution. The bottom line is whatever actions I take in a leadership role directly benefit from consultation with others.

The Hurricane Katrina disaster obviously displayed serious leadership gaps, maybe not so much in individual local, state, and national leadership abilities, but rather in the group leadership of responding to the disaster. The assessment of the response will result in a laundry list of actions that could have been taken to reduce the impact on the residents of the Gulf Coast. However, the leadership gaps were primarily due to a lack of communication, and the saddest fact is that the pressure of the mounting crisis meant that very little could occur until the communication gaps were filled. When asked what he learned most from the disaster Mayor Ray Nagin of New Orleans stated “I learned not to assume things were happening.”

I suggest we can apply the lessons from Jefferson and Katrina to leadership: communicate, seek wise counsel, and then act.

Thomas Jefferson

“Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude. “

Third President of the United States 1801-1809.
Vice President 1797-1801. Architect of the Declaration of Independence.
Ambassador to France

(1835 - 1910)

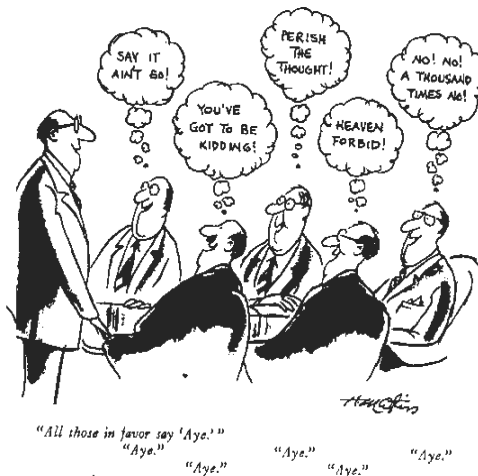


GROUPTHINK— AVOIDING A COMMON PITFALL

Groupthink is a term coined by psychologist Irving Janis in 1972 to describe a process by which a group can make bad or irrational decisions. In a groupthink situation, each member of the group attempts to conform his or her opinions to what they believe to be the consensus of the group. In a general sense this seems to be a very rationalistic way to approach the situation. However this results in a situation in which the group ultimately agrees upon an action which each member might individually consider to be unwise (the risky shift).

Janis' original definition of the term was "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action." The word groupthink was intended to be reminiscent of George Orwell's coinages (such as doublethink and duckspeak) from the fictional language Newspeak, which he portrayed in his novel Nineteen Eighty-Four.

Groupthink tends to occur on committees and in large organizations. Janis origi-



From: Myers, David G. (1996, 5th edition); *Social Psychology*, NY, Mc Graw-Hill, S. 339 ff

Janis cited a number of **antecedent conditions that would be likely to encourage groupthink**. These include:

- Insulation of the group
- High group cohesiveness
- Directive leadership
- Lack of norms requiring methodical procedures
- Homogeneity of members' social background and ideology
- High stress from external threats with low hope of a better solution than the one offered by the leader(s)

Janis listed eight **symptoms that he said were indicative of groupthink**:

- Illusion of invulnerability
- Unquestioned belief in the inherent morality of the group
- Collective rationalization of group's decisions
- Shared stereotypes of outgroup, particularly opponents
- Self-censorship; members withhold criticisms
- Illusion of unanimity (see false consensus effect)
- Direct pressure on dissenters to conform
- Self-appointed "mindguards" protect the group from negative information

Finally, the seven **symptoms of decision affected by groupthink** are:

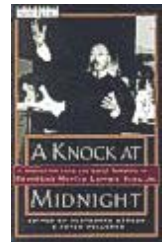
- Incomplete survey of alternatives
- Incomplete survey of objectives
- Failure to examine risks of preferred choice

Did You Know??

Southern Region Headquarters has established a Leadership Library, which consists of workbooks, video tapes, audio tapes, and books. This Leadership Library is a part of Southern Region's BLAST program. This library is formulated around the interest of Southern Region employees on improving their leadership skills.



workbooks



audio tapes



books

LOCAL BLAST HIGHLIGHT— HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVE



By Kerry Jones, WFO Albuquerque

Considering a local BLAST meeting this fall? How about an “activity” instead? Hosting a workplace food drive is a great way to connect with your local community, especially during the holiday season. Many of you have been involved in food drives at various levels, including perhaps your local office. Organizing an office food drive and expanding upon the event to include an end-of-year office party can be a rewarding combination.

WFO Albuquerque held its 1st annual Holiday Food Drive in 2004 and raised nearly 200 pounds of non-perishable food. The food drive culminated in a pot luck lunch at the office that brought together employees and their families, retirees, and friends. A similar get-together is planned this year. Below are some suggestions to help make your food drive a success.

Set your goal early: Determine the number of pounds you want to raise. You might think about your goal in terms of a certain number of pounds per person. Report your progress to everyone regularly. If you hosted a food drive last year as a group, set your goal to double last year’s collection.

Office Party: Invite all employees and families to the office for a pot luck to mark the end of the collection campaign. You could also throw a kick off party to announce goals, incentives and other food drive details.

Educate Your Donors: Contact your local food bank who can provide you with hunger facts and/or a speaker to use in your educational efforts.

Cans for Coins: Set up collection cans for coins in the reception area. Encourage people to drop pocket change as they pass. At the end of the week, designate someone to take the money to purchase canned foods. You’ll be surprised how many more pounds of food are added to your food drive.

“We’ll Shop for Food”: You may have some people who would rather contribute money than bring food to work. Designate people that will “Shop for Food.” They will collect money, do the shopping, and bring in the food.

Weekly drawing/prize: Each time people bring in a bag full of food, give them a ticket for a drawing, the more food they bring in, the more opportunity for them to win.



Pictured L to R: David Jerkins, Deirdre Kann, Joe Alfieri, Kerry Jones, Peggy Williams, Jeff Michalski, and Daniel Porter; WFO ABQ

2006 BLAST CLASS ANNOUNCED!



Congratulations to the Southern Region BLAST Class of 2006

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Brian Boyd | Hydrologist, WFO Morristown |
| Mike Buchanan | Forecaster, WFO Corpus Christi |
| Eric Carpenter | Forecaster, WFO Jackson |
| Angela Enyedi | Forecaster, WFO Jacksonville |
| Jeff Evans | Forecaster, Storm Prediction Center |
| Barry Goldsmith | Forecaster, WFO Tampa |
| Greg Jackson | ITO, WFO Midland |
| Andy Kula | Forecaster, WFO Huntsville |
| Kent Kuyper | Forecaster, WFO Lake Charles |
| Brian LaMarre | WCM, WFO Lubbock |
| Bill Lawrence | DOH, ABRFC - Tulsa |
| Pablo Santos | SOO, WFO Miami |
| Doug Streu | Instructor, FAA Academy - Oklahoma City |
| Greg Garrett | ITO, WFO Jackson |

See the BLAST section of the Southern Region website at 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, listed below.

LEADERSHIP ESSENTIALS

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

- Team Leader/Editor - Jody James, Senior Forecaster, WFO Lubbock, TX
- BLAST Newsletter Team - Jeffrey Cupo, SOO, WFO Midland, TX
- Mark Fox, Regional Training Officer, SRH Fort Worth, TX
- Kerry Jones, Senior Forecaster, WFO Albuquerque, NM
- Ed Calianese, WCM, WFO Tulsa, OK

Founder's note holds wise words (article referenced - Zeitler, page 1)

"Never suffer a thought to be harbored in your mind which you would not avow openly. When tempted to do anything in secret, ask yourself if you would do it in public. If you would not, be sure it is wrong."

- letter from Thomas Jefferson to his grandson Francis Eppes, 14, Monticello, May 21, 1816

By RANDY COHEN Published Tuesday, July 5, 2005

Jefferson's 19th-century advice would undoubtedly forestall much contemporary misconduct.

It also would eliminate most showers. That's one limitation of an ethics of transparency: The desire for privacy need not be an acknowledgment of wrongdoing.

Many benign activities are quite sensibly conducted out of public view — for example, bathing, the pursuit of sexual happiness or the design of the next iMac — and our language reflects this. To act in secret — Jefferson's word — can connote the illicit, suggesting shame, furtiveness and criminality; to act in private implies modesty, dignity and self-reliance. Unfortunately, Jefferson didn't give young Francis a way to distinguish between the two.

Jefferson's advice has a more serious shortcoming: It demands only that we conform to local custom. Jefferson lived in a slave-owning society, and he owned slaves — openly, in public. He did so with some remorse, perhaps, but without sufficient moral urgency to free them, excepting a few, something his contemporary George Washington was able to do, if only upon his death. Jefferson's system of moral thought did not equip him to transcend the behavior of his neighbors, in this regard at least.

It is noteworthy that Jefferson would regulate not only deeds but also thoughts, even though there are honest thoughts that we wisely decline to avow openly. (Why, yes, that does make you look fat.) Civility relies on restraint, on not voicing every passing idea, not because it is false but because its utterance might be hurtful.

But Jefferson was not instructing Francis in social niceties; neither was he denying him the privacy of his own mind or cautioning him against hypocrisy. Jefferson was suggesting that by nurturing unexpressed ideas, each of us risks becoming a cult of one, our beliefs untested and unsupported. It is by airing our thoughts that we can discover their flaws and our fatuities. In this we can see Jefferson as an enlightenment figure, applying something like the scientific method to his own mind.

Jefferson's enthusiasm for discourse and debate had its limits, notes Herbert Sloan of the Barnard College history department: "Jefferson deplored the way anti-administration newspapers were corrupting the public mind and urged the governor of Pennsylvania to undertake prosecutions for seditious libel."

But Jefferson's inability to always heed his own advice makes him not hypocritical but human, and it does not gainsay the wisdom of that advice.

An ethics based on imagined public scrutiny is not infallible, but it is a fine guide for a young man starting out in life.

Jefferson sent his grandson this counsel along with a volume of Greek grammar — "You might, while at home, amuse yourself with learning the letters and spelling" — believing both would be useful as he undertook his studies at New London Academy.

True education, Jefferson wrote in the same letter, means "uniting merit with your learning."

Apparently, Jefferson and the masters at New London provided Francis a reasonable amount of both. After completing his education, he eventually moved to Florida, where he was elected mayor of Tallahassee and helped found what would become Florida State University; establishing universities seems to have run in the family.

If his accomplishments were less than his grandfather's — well, whose aren't?