

# LEADERSHIP ESSENTIALS



A NWS SR Newsletter promoting BLAST and the principles of leadership

Volume II, Issue 2, July, 2005

## THE ART OF LISTENING

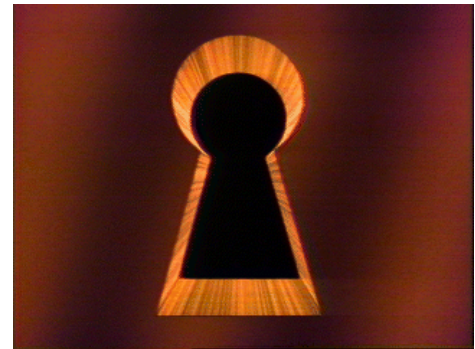
BY FRANCES HESSELBEIN  
FROM LEADER TO LEADER  
INSTITUTE

The person who had the greatest impact upon my life, my career, and my work was my grandmother. People always expect me to talk about John W. Gardner, Peter Drucker, Warren Bennis, or Jim Collins -- all the great thought leaders who have been part of my journey. They all have had a powerful impact upon my life and my work. Yet from my first consciousness of relations with other people my grandmother has been my leadership model. She listened very carefully. With grandchildren six or seven years old, she looked into our eyes and she listened as though it was the most important thing she could be doing at that moment, and she never cut us off. We finished our little story, whatever it was. And we learned to listen through our experience with her. She listened to us with total concentration and warm response and we learned to listen because we wanted to be like Mama Wicks. That kind of sensitivity and appreciation of others was a very important lesson, learned very early. And all through my life I often go back and think

about something she encouraged me to memorize.

When she was a little girl, her family had a lumber mill back in the mountains of western Pennsylvania where they made barrel staves. The family built this little lumber mill long before the Civil War began, in the 1840s. Nearby was a one-room schoolhouse that she and her father and grandfather had attended. Above the blackboard was a maxim that could have been from a McGuffey Reader; it had always been there. It was this maxim she

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- SPC - Blasting into the Future
- Review "Winning With People" - John Maxwell
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### SPC - BLASTING INTO THE FUTURE

By Dave Imy, Sarah Taylor,  
SPC  
Norman, OK

About 4 years ago, the SPC investigated the possibility of developing a local BLAST course for SPC staff members, similar to the one now in Southern Region. It didn't take long to realize that given the

relatively small size of our center (32 federal employees), we did not have the resources (money or individuals) to develop and present a course of the same magnitude as the SR BLAST. With this in mind, SPC Director Joe Schaefer contacted Bill Proenza and Gary Grice to see if

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had me memorize: "If wisdom's ways you would wisely seek, these five things observe with care: of whom you speak, to whom you speak, how, when, and where." I memorized that when I was eight years old. Years later I have to smile; the only time I ever get into trouble is when I forget my grandmother's advice about "these five things."

“It's called respect, it's called appreciation, it's called anticipation -- and it's called leadership. “

It's called respect, it's called appreciation, it's called anticipation -- and it's called leadership. I thought of my grandmother again recently when I was interviewed by a writer working on an article -- on "the listening leader." Listening is an art. When people are speaking it requires that they have our undivided attention. We focus on them; we listen very carefully. We listen to the spoken words and the unspoken messages. This means looking directly at the person, eyes connected -- we forget we have a watch, just focusing for that moment on that person. It's called respect, it's called appreciation, it's called anticipation -- and it's called leadership.

Listening is one of the most effective ways of learning what the customer values. We listen to all our customers, all the people within the organization and those beyond the walls of the organization. And through listening we learn what they value. This is a critical skill and an indispensable attitude. When we learn this, it brings us to a higher level of understanding and appreciation of our own people and of those we can reach beyond the walls.

When it's obvious we're not being heard, it's time to listen. When we listen with total engagement, communication is not just saying something; it is being heard. And since communication is being heard, the leader consciously asks, "Am I getting through, is my message being heard?" How many times have we heard a leader complain, "I've told him and I've told him, but he just doesn't get it"? The leader was talking yet not being heard, was not communicating. When this happens, when it's obvious we're not being heard, it's time to listen, time to deliver the message a different way. Listening is the essential element of effective leadership.

Believing that the quality and character of a leader determine the performance and results, the success of our leadership depends on how effectively we mobilize our people around mission and values and vision, and how effectively all of our people listen to the customer. We are most successful when the communication is circular.

As I finish this column the future is ever more tenuous. I think again of my grandmother who, even as she listened to her children and her grandchildren, told us stories about the men in the family who went off to the Civil War and stories about their wives who were left behind to take care of children and farms. She talked in such a compelling way that we listened and remembered her stories long, long after she was gone and we were grown.

A world at war requires new levels of leadership from all of us wherever we are, in whatever we are doing. When times are difficult, the art, the discipline of effective communication, becomes even more essential, and listening is the key for leaders who would be heard. Listening is part of the art of leadership: never more needed, never more essential for leaders of change -- the indispensable companion on our journey to leadership. ♦



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## SPC - BLASTING INTO THE FUTURE



SPC forecasters could also participate with SR in BLAST. They were both very receptive to the idea and agreed to SPC forecasters competing for at least one class slot annually, if the SPC provided facilitation assistance.

The first SPC participant in the SR BLAST was Sarah Taylor in January 2003. Sarah was impressed with the training and found it would be beneficial for all SPC staff members. Her comments included, "I felt like the training was the best I've received since being in the NWS. There have been many beneficial changes that I've made in my own leadership style since the BLAST class. For example, one of the things the course emphasized was the importance of balancing long-term vision and short-term goals. The course taught me that we need to understand the big picture, but also recognize how to divide a bigger project into smaller tasks. More importantly, we learned to focus our efforts on problems we can actually have an effect on, rather than spending valuable time in areas where we have little or no influence."

Sarah put her words into action by organizing local BLAST meetings, along with fellow BLAST WFO Norman classmates Dave Andra and Kevin Brown. One of the highlights of these meetings included a very motivating and forward thinking presentation by Norman Bowles (retired Director of the FAA Logistics Center). His energy and enthusiasm for BLAST and the NWS was uplifting. His main message was the NWS needs to be innovative and provide more value in our services, which is vital for any business to thrive. Since his talk, the SPC has added more value by creating and issuing new products and even adjusting some of the issuance times to better accommodate our partners.

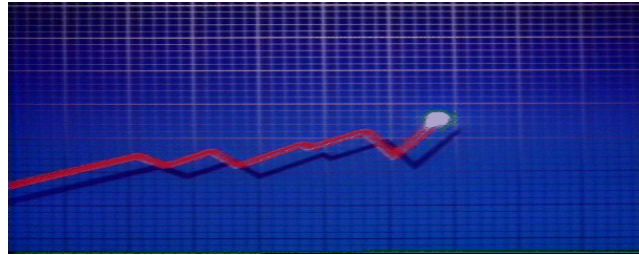
Another aspect of leadership that has led to a number of successes at the SPC has been the sharing of decision making between forecasters and management. For example, the SPC forecasters have played a large role in determining the best way to incorporate probabilities into the forecast suite (severe convective probabilities, enhanced thunder, and watch probabilities, which will be available on the SPC web page this spring). Teams were established to develop the primary ideas/thoughts regarding the new products. The team results were discussed with the SPC management and the rest of the forecasters. Once a consensus was reached, the team worked together to implement the product launch. Although the end results indicate the process has worked well, it also presented challenges. When motivated team members put considerable effort and thought into developing candidate plans and options, it is not uncommon for differences of opinion to arise. The process of reaching consensus requires give and take on the part of all involved, and as dialogue is extended to management and the entire forecast staff, a solution is eventually reached. In the end, the best way to succeed is to ensure that everyone involved understands the main goal is to provide a better service to your customers, and when this happens, the entire team wins.

The bottom line mission of the NWS is to protect life and property. In this day and age of greater competition, computer speed and technological changes, the SPC strives to provide severe weather products which help our partners and customers better prepare for potential life threatening severe weather situations. Through shared decision-making, the SPC is prepared to continue developing and implementing improved severe weather products that will enhance the NWS's core mission. ♦

*“Managers are people who do things right, while leaders are people who do the right thing.” - Warren Bennis, Ph.D. “On Becoming a Leader”*



## Leadership Glossary



### ***authoritarian leadership***

A style of leadership in which the leader tells the employees what needs to be done and how to perform it without getting their advice or ideas.

### ***corporate culture***

The set of important assumptions that members of the company share. It is a system of shared values about what is important and beliefs about how the company works. These common assumptions influence the ways the company operates.

### ***delegative leadership***

A style of leadership in which the leader entrusts decision making to an employee of a group of employees. The leader is still responsible for their decisions.

### ***kaizen***

The Japanese term for improvement. It involves both workers and managers.

### ***participative leadership***

A style of leadership in which the leader involves one or more employees in determining what to do and how to do it. The leader maintains final decision making authority.

### ***process improvement***

Activities designed to identify and eliminate causes of poor quality, process variation, and non-value added activities.

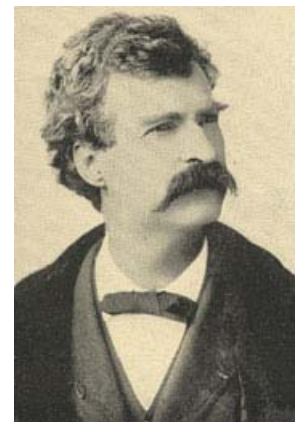
### ***total quality management (TQM)***

Describes Japanese style management approaches to quality improvement. It includes the long term success of the organization through customer satisfaction and is based on participation of all members of the organization in improving process, products, service, culture, etc.

## *Mark Twain*

“I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.”

Author and Humorist  
(1835 - 1910)





## BOOK REVIEW— WINNING WITH PEOPLE

By Jody James, Senior Forecaster  
WFO Lubbock, TX

Would you like to win with people? I'm sure most of us would certainly put a high priority on improving relationships - at the workplace, in the community, and especially at home with those we love. John Maxwell's new book, "Winning With People", is a collection of proven principles that addresses the topics of good and growing relationships and working to improve our interactions with people.

John Maxwell has plenty of experience upon which to draw. Early in his career, he pastored one of the largest and fast growing churches in the nation in San Diego, California. Later, he began traveling around the country teaching managers and business executives about teamwork, management techniques, and leadership. Today, he owns several companies, all of which have a mission of equipping people with the knowledge and skills to become better leaders and better people.

Relational principles discussed in the book include "The Number 10 Principle", which says that "believing the best in people usually brings out the best in people." Another is the "Lens Principle" which states that "we do not see others as they are, we see others as we are", and one which I found amusing but very true, the "Bob Principle", which states very plainly, "When Bob has a problem with everyone, Bob is usually the problem."

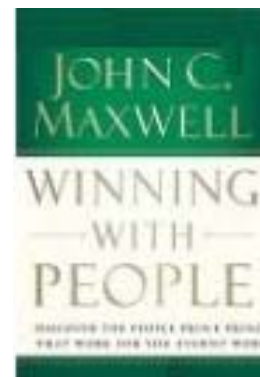
The book includes many colorful stories and anecdotes from other writers, and a few from John's own life.

The author encourages us to renew our perspectives and attitudes toward relationships and to strive to develop positive habits. He relates the importance of maturity, and discusses being emotionally ready to grow in specific areas. The importance of healthy relationships is emphasized as it pertains to successful businesses and effective customer service. I found the book very revealing on a personal level at times, and discovered a few areas in which I needed more attention and work.

This title would serve well as a reference allowing you to work on specific areas as the need arises. At the end of each chapter is a series of questions designed to reinforce the concepts in the chapter and allow you to think further on the ideas presented.

After finishing "Winning With People", I was reminded why John Maxwell continues to be one of the most highly sought after leadership teachers and mentors in the country. His advice is insightful and practical. This title would make an excellent addition to one's personal management/leadership library.

“ The importance of healthy relationships is emphasized as it pertains to successful businesses and effective customer service.”



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

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

John Maxwell (2004). Winning With People: Discover the People Principles That Work Every Time. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 275 p.).





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, listed below.

## LOCAL BLAST HIGHLIGHT WFO LUBBOCK- ALBUQUERQUE



“...the possibilities for this type of interaction are endless.”

### Team BLAST Telcon - Albuquerque & Lubbock

By Mark Fox, WFO Lubbock

Is your office looking for a different way to conduct a local BLAST meeting? Or, would you just like to get a different viewpoint on leadership concepts? One way to mix things up is to conduct your next BLAST meeting with a neighboring office.

While this idea may sound cost prohibitive, using a conference call makes the sharing of ideas possible and quite easy. In February, WFO Albuquerque and WFO Lubbock got together for a BLAST meeting, with the topic of diversity. Forecasters Kerry Jones (ABQ) and Mark Fox (LUB) obtained the copies of the video tape, *Wealth, Innovation, and Diversity...Putting Our Differences to Work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The video was shown to groups in each office before initiating the conference call, which then took about 45 minutes. For this to work, another copy of the video was obtained on loan from Central Region, so plan well in advance if you would like to try this out. During this combined meeting, a total of 22 people attended the group meeting, including Interns, HMTs, and forecasters, as well as an OPL, SOO and both MICs.

Justin Weaver, WFO LUB MIC, said “Since this meeting had such a diverse group of people to begin with, it was interesting to hear the differing points of view on different subjects. It was also good to hear that despite hearing the different viewpoints, everyone seemed to be on the same page, and on the same team.” Joe Alfieri, WFO ABQ OPL, commented that “not only was the candidness of the discussion appreciated, but it gave everyone a little boost afterward.” The video was “thought provoking,” another ABQ staff member remarked.

This same concept can be used in many different ways. For example, if, through the SR Intranet “Cool Stuff” section, you discover a program, idea, etc. that would benefit your office, you could initiate a local BLAST meeting via conference call with that office to gather details on what needs to be done to implement that idea. The remainder of the local BLAST meeting could be conducted to determine how best to lead the effort at your office. Or, as Kerry Jones said during the meeting, “the possibilities for this type of interaction are endless.”

## LEADERSHIP ESSENTIALS

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

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