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Description of document: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) leadership commentaries: Leadership Best Practices, 2009-2011

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Source of document: Freedom of Information Act Request
FDIC
Legal Division
FOIA/PA Group
550 17th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20429
Fax: 703-562-2797
[FDIC's Electronic Request Form](#)

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April 28, 2017

RE: FDIC FOIA Log Number 17-0192

This will respond to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request in which you requested leadership commentaries as described in a December 15, 2011 article written by Marie A. Westbrook.¹

Enclosed please find copies of the records located by the FDIC (consisting of a total of 26 pages) which are responsive to your request.² However, certain information in these records has been redacted pursuant to FOIA Exemptions 2 and/or 6, 5 U.S.C. §552(b)(2) and/or (b)(6). Exemption 2 permits the withholding of information related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency. Exemption 6 permits the withholding of personnel and medical files and similar files the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

You may contact me at 703-562-2067, or our FOIA Public Liaison, Acting FDIC Ombudsman Gordon Talbot, by email at GTalbot@fdic.gov or telephone at 703-562-6040, for any further assistance and to discuss any aspect of your request. Additionally, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is as follows: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road-OGIS, College Park, Maryland 20740-6001, email at ogis@nara.gov; telephone at 202-741-5770; toll free at 1-877-684-6448; or facsimile at 202-741-5769.

If you are not satisfied with the response to this request, you may administratively appeal by writing to the FDIC's General Counsel. Your appeal must be postmarked or electronically transmitted within 90 days of the date of the response to your request. Your appeal should be addressed to the FOIA/PA Group, Legal Division, FDIC, 550 17th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20429. Please refer to the log number and include any additional information that you would like the General Counsel to consider.

¹ Your FOIA request was received on March 21, 2017 by way of Senior Counsel Barbara Katron's letter to you regarding FOIA Appeal No. 17-0008-A.

² We have reasonably interpreted your request to seek leadership commentaries for the timeframe of November 2008 to February 2011.

Sincerely,

Natasha Smith
Government Information Specialist
FOIA/Privacy Act Group

Enclosures

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DECEMBER 2009

Morale

"We had people working weekends away from home, weeks and months at a time. We had people making decisions at 3:00 a.m., learning how to eat pizza for breakfast. We had people who were doing things they probably weren't commissioned or authorized to do, but they just did the right thing and moved on to the next challenge". - Joseph Neely, FDIC, August 1998.

What Joseph Neely captured in his reflections on the FDIC and RTC experience (1980-1994) seems all too familiar to us as we close 2009. Whether in the field conducting exams and facilitating resolution activities or in HQ providing the decision-making and support services critical to our effectiveness, most of what we do happens behind the scenes. Our employees will seldom receive the credit or public recognition necessary to boost their morale and sustain their enthusiasm for tackling another endless day and daunting responsibilities.

What strengthens morale during crisis situations?

- Recognition of sacrifice employees are making to meet the mission.
- Genuine sense that someone cares about their individual contribution.
- Personal connection by the leader.
- Linking their contribution to a higher purpose.

Reminiscent of weary troops who must find the spirit and courage to continue to "fight the good fight," employees look to us to lead them through the year ahead. Our ability to inspire them, to meaningfully recognize their contributions and to sustain them is a true measure of our leadership ability and commitment.

Sir Winston Churchill clearly understood this in his reflections upon visiting the war room of the Royal Air Force in Uxbridge, England, August 16, 1940.

"Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few."

Master Sgt. Anthony Davis understood this as well in Mosul, Iraq as reflected in excerpts from the condolence book written in his honor, November 2008.

I am currently in Iraq and am lucky to have known MSG Davis. He was the best. He was very funny and always had us laughing. He used to always say "play the game" since there were times some of us wanted to just give up. I spoke to him for about an hour one day...just talking about life and the Army in general. He gave me advice I asked for and advice I didn't ask for it. That's the person he was. He was an outgoing, wonderful person who will truly be missed. (Anonymous)

The time we were on the road in Iraq was nerve wrecking but knowing his presence was near made the mission go a lot easier, the knowledge both military and life experience he shared to the soldiers and myself was a blessing.

SSG Michael Ethridge (Fort Stewart, GA)

What better way to close our Leadership in Action for 2009 than to reflect on what our leadership message will be to our employees. In the spirit of Churchill and MSG Davis and countless other leaders who so artfully recognized the sacrifice of their people and sustained them throughout, take time today to find the words your staff need to hear.



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NOVEMBER 2009

Endurance**"How to sustain your staff when you can't see when the end is in sight."**

This is the question we posed to internal and external colleagues with significant experience in crisis leadership. Their answers may form the basis for a new way of approaching your leadership role over the next few months.

- Building Endurance
 - FDIC is a "get it done" culture. Inspire your staff by reminding them of their role in a historic time within the regulatory sector.
 - Encourage people to take care of each other. Watch for when someone is hitting the wall.
 - Ensure constant communication.
 - Find reasons for celebrations. Host a breakfast, recognize your staff's contributions.
 - Be there in person, walk around and touch base with your staff.
 - Set up lunch with administrative staff who though far "from the action," contribute to getting the job done.
 - History has a way of repeating itself and a crisis is when the people of FDIC do their best work. Remind your staff that "this too shall pass" and help them to maintain perspective.
 - Create assumptions that your staff can rely on to target their efforts. Discuss best case, worst case and most likely scenarios. Draw the attention of your staff to the most likely scenario and develop a joint strategy on how to perform within that scenario and avoid a climate of "results at any cost."
 - Emotional support is the key to endurance. If you truly care for your staff put your heart into your message. The most powerful action you can take is to talk routinely with your staff in a way that clearly shows you care about "them." Start each meeting with a question or comment that focuses on them. Not the job at hand but the people who are the hands. "How are we doing? How are we holding up? What can we do to take better care of ourselves?"
 - Focus on a common sense of commitment. Leaders need to "walk the talk" by not asking people to do things they are doing themselves.
 - Teams get weary not so much because of the work as the constant redirection of effort. Upper management needs to take on this issue and boost morale on the front lines.
 - Always assume the crisis will be lengthy. Pace yourself and your staff for the long-term. Again, all of us are in the crisis. We are past the "early phase."
- Create reasons for laughter.

If you have suggestions for future editions or follow-up questions on this issue, please contact Marie Westbrook at

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OCTOBER 2009

Managing the Pace of Crisis

A few weeks ago the Chair of Leadership joined Michael Chertoff (former Secretary DHS), General Michael Hayden (former director CIA and National Security Agency) and Admiral Thad Allen, Commandant USCG in a panel discussion on crisis leadership. Below are some of their observations and will be incorporating additional observations in future postings.

One characteristic of every crisis situation is the unrelenting demand for performance from the hearts and hands of employees, especially those "on the front line."

In the August 1998 symposium on the FDIC and RTC experience reflections from a retiring regional director with a 30 year career captured the experience in this way. "We had people working weekends away from home, weeks and months at a time. We had people making decisions at 3:00 am, learning how to eat pizza for breakfast. We had people who were doing things they probably weren't commissioned or authorized to do, but they just did the right thing and moved on to the next challenge."

Advice from the experts:

- General Hayden- Be frank with your staff and tell them this is the "new normal", but be diligent on requiring that they pace themselves by taking time off. Rotate fresh teams in to give relief. Assign unessential duties to support staff.
- Ambassador Howell (Iraqi siege of U.S. embassy in Kuwait) - We couldn't see the end of our imprisonment. This was very hard. We built our community around what we needed to do to take care of each other, survive and celebrated "milestones."
- Commandant Allen & Ambassador Bushnell- If the activity doesn't facilitate managing the crisis workload or taking care of your people – STOP DOING IT.
- Manage performance expectations by establishing priorities and negotiating how and when if no is not an option.
- Admiral Atkin- Streamline assignments. Focus only on essential activities.
- Ask your staff what they need to stop doing; Solicit and accept recommendations from your staff on streamlining critical activities.
- Guide your staff concerning what level of effort is required to get the job done. Not everything requires a "10".

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- Monitor meetings. Keep them short and to the point. Use conference calls. Save face to face meetings for only critical issues.
- Streamline documentation reviews. Understand the difference between "accuracy" and unnecessary perfection standards.
- Have a frank discussion with your staff on how to navigate through any "results at any cost" situations.
- Ambassador Howell - (Iraqi siege of U.S. embassy in Kuwait) - Assign duties that match the capabilities of the staff. Top performance now includes the ability to manage stress. Your new "top performers" may be different than you expected.
- Set up a person to person system to monitor for signs of stress reactions.

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SEPTEMBER 2009

Empowering Employees

When managing risk is a measure of our success and empowering employees is regarded as a critical measure of our culture, how do we balance the need for oversight with the need for autonomy in decision making? What steps can managers take to facilitate effective decision making and empowerment? In preparation for our Chairman's Leadership Series, we posed these questions to Captain Geoff Abbott and RADM Tom Atkin, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). Their answers provide a foundation for leading strategically through empowerment.

Steps leaders can take - lessons from managing risk, meeting mission requirements and empowering employees.

1. Provide clarity concerning your mission (exactly what do you want to accomplish and why).
2. Be clear on your intent (how do you want to conduct business). In Katrina the USCG's mantra was "Treat everybody as if they were family." This was the question asked at the end of each day. Along with all of the tactical requirements, did we conduct business based on our intent?
3. Provide a step by step focus and then get out of the way.
 - Focus on extensive communication.
 - Focus on collaboration and cooperation of all players.
 - Provide clear guidance, direction, prioritization of efforts.
 - Delegate effectively and let people do their jobs.
 - Ask follow up questions to ensure that what was directed was accomplished or that you understand the reasons why actions had been delayed or were unsuccessful.
4. Don't second guess decisions made by people on the front line. Provide "soft landings" for people when things go wrong. Learn from mistakes.
5. Don't let the organizational chart limit you. Empowerment is not defined by a box on a chart.
6. Know your people's strengths and weaknesses and place them where they can be successful.

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AUGUST 2009

4 Cores of Credibility

The Speed of Trust Program highlights the "4 Cores of Credibility" to assist leaders in maintaining trust with their staff. These are the foundational elements that make us believable, both to ourselves and others. The four cores are integrity, intent, capabilities, and results.

Steps leaders can take to build trust and credibility with their teams

1. Keep ourselves and our team in balance
 - Purposeful conversations during staff meetings on the need to balance:
 - a. Getting results
 - b. Building talent (capabilities)
 - c. Building a team climate of "Intent" (we are in this together)
 - d. Building team integrity (we can be trusted and trust each other)
2. Model these behaviors first. Your team will not follow if you fail to demonstrate your commitment.
 - Make and keep commitments to yourself.
 - Identify your strengths and focus on leveraging them.
 - Know your areas for development and focus on improvement.
 - Practice a better work/life balance. Be public about it. Tell your team you are going home on time (today) to be with your family, get exercise, etc....
 - Talk with your team members about their plans for building their capabilities
 - Assist team members who need to "extend trust" if trust has been broken within the team.

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JULY 2009

Building a Foundation for Trust

1) Is trust building behavior a critical measure of our success within FDIC?

- What does your team think?

2) How do you signal "extending trust" within your team?

- Delegate with confidence.
- Ask for feedback and mean it.
- Bridge the gap with a difficult relationship (take the first step).
- Let employees know where you stand.
- Give credit to others.
- Address the tough stuff directly.
- Listen before you speak.
- Make commitments carefully and keep them at all costs.

3) Taking a pulse. How would you know if trust is broken or diminished within your team?

- What is your early warning system?
- When you sense something is wrong, how quickly do you address it (do you need to adopt a 24 hour rule)?

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JUNE 2009

Managing Stress

In crisis situations managing stress is not a luxury, it is a key long term survival factor. Managers who imagine they can simply "run faster" by working harder are those most at risk for stress-related complications. Organizational and individual strategies for managing stress include:

- Talk frankly about the stress (this is not a time for the stiff upper lip).
- Monitor for signs of "burn out" (poor concentration, increased irritability, no energy, significant mood changes, feelings of overwhelmed to the point of hopelessness).
- Create informal "buddy systems" to monitor each other's coping skills or stress level.
- Strengthen physical capacity (exercise).
- Boost emotional capacity and maintain mental capacity (create personal space, learn to say no, leave the worksite, find activities that completely distract you from your "working mind"- yoga, reading in a foreign language, music).

Another FDIC Resource for informative articles, helpful tools, and audio tips to manage stress is [WorkLife Connections](#), offered through the WorkLife Program. You can access this service via the web using the user ID:

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MAY 2009

Managing Uncertainty

Uncertainty creates unique conditions in which we must lead and manage. Predictability diminishes, information accelerates, a state of urgency is pervasive and decision making occurs in a state of "unknowns". Leading during times of crisis brings us face to face with what is essential. There is no time or energy for unessential items. Proven strategies for managing uncertainty include:

- Remain Strategic-Deal with the immediate. (Describe what needs to be done and why, ask your people "how".)
- Say "No" to bureaucratic demands or negotiate "when and how".
- Create assumptions to boundary "unknowns" — best case, worse case and most likely.
- Let go of "authority" to maintain "control" — control comes from the confidence you place in the persons closest to the action point or the issue.
- Mobilize resources to be prepared to respond to unanticipated needs.
- Rethink your organizational chart- free up decision making.
- Develop a disciplined practice for "people care" and "self care".

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DECEMBER 2010

Leading Transitions

"No one has been where you are before...there are no best practices; you need to develop 'next practices'."
 Marty Linsky, Remarks at December 2010, Chairman's Leadership Series.

As we come to the close of 2010, we are all quite cognizant of the significance of the transitions ahead of us and how our skill in leading transitions will be critical to our success and our continued effectiveness.

From key components of the Dodd/Frank legislation (resolution planning, backup examination authority, additional rule writing responsibilities, OTS and CFPB staff and institutional transfers, DIF fund modifications) to the organizational changes already underway and anticipated leadership changes, we enter another period where we will be responsible for defining solutions and developing strategies to reduce the ambiguity and uncertainty that is inherent in the early stages of significant transitions.

In the December Chairman's Leadership Series, Professor Marty Linsky, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, joined me in examining the issue of how to lead during times of transition. Here are 7 ideas we would like to offer for your consideration:

- Focus more on adaptation and less on execution (leave behind what gets in the way and be aware of what needs to be preserved).
- Think "running experiments" rather than solving problems (in circumstances where clear guidance is not available you will need to run multiple experiments to see what works).
- Think "interdependent." Spend more time thinking of horizontal relationships outside of the agency. Be in the business of relationship building.
- Develop a different relationship with conflict. In transition situations understand that conflict represents values and belief systems that need to be surfaced and addressed. (Measure your effectiveness as your ability to surface the issue and manage the conversation.)
- No one has been where you are before. There are no best practices. You are inventing "next practices."
- You need to be at the top of your game. Take full responsibility to take care of yourself. Create that space for yourself so that you can bring your "A" game in every day.
- Shift your thinking from having the right answers to asking the right questions.



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Questions to Consider

Strategic Focus: What is my new short term focus? What is my longer term focus? What changes in direction do I need to consider? How do I stay on top of changing priorities?	Nimble Use of Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What skills are needed to meet the new requirements? What "in house" expertise can we rely on? Given certain assumptions what are our new essential tasks? How should I deploy resources now?
Feedback/Information: What info do I need? What info do I need to provide and to whom? Are there new stakeholders or relationships to consider? How will I maintain feedback loops?	People: How will this affect me? How will this affect my staff? How will I keep my team motivated?

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NOVEMBER 2010

Senior Leaders' Reflections

In November 2010, FDIC executives Steve App, Mitchell Glassman and Paul Nash joined federal sector executives Ambassador Prudence Bushnell and Steve Wilson (International Trade Administration) in the launch of the College of Leadership Development's Executive Leadership Seminar and shared their reflections on leading strategically.

Their lessons learned will prove to be helpful to us during our current stage of transition and longer term as we continue to focus on developing our strategies for leading effectively.

Leadership is Authentic

- Know yourself and recognize your emotional state.
- Utilize self-awareness and admit your "blind spots."
- Be consistent.
- Work at it - continue to improve.

Leadership is Situational

- You need to be able to adopt a new way of thinking and adapt to each situation.
- Put aside what you are comfortable with and develop a new point of reference.
- In leadership positions the information you receive will oftentimes be filtered; cultivate relationships where people will give you uncensored and reliable information and honest feedback.

Leadership is Relational

- Leadership is not about you... it is about creating conditions where your people can do their jobs.
- Treat people with dignity.
- In a crisis you must develop relationships very quickly.
- Ask for feedback..."How am I doing?"
- Tell new employees who you are and what they can expect from you.

Leadership is Strategic

- Your starting point is leading strategically.
- Rely on your "best instincts" and keep an open-mind.
- Think strategically, act intentionally.

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OCTOBER 2010

Solidarity

"We just came to help and do what we could."

Matt Staffel, a 29 year old driller from Denver, Colorado, expressed these words of surprise when relatives of the 33 miners trapped underground in the San Jose Mine collapse hugged, kissed and embraced him as he made his way through the mountain-side encampment where families held vigil awaiting the extraction of their loved ones.

Matt Stattel's remark reflects the characteristic of "solidarity," described by Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones in *Why Should Anyone Be Led by You?* as "task-focused cooperation between individuals and groups." In simpler terms, workplaces with a culture of solidarity are characterized by a willingness to get work done under any circumstances and are often highly effective at accomplishing critical tasks.

Solidarity alone, however, falls short of creating a sense of community within the workplace unless accompanied by a culture of relationship building based on shared ideas and values, which Goffee and Jones refer to as "sociability." In fact, over time, solidarity alone puts an organization at risk for developing a "mercenary" culture "displayed by high solidarity and low sociability with cooperative action occurring only when there are clear measureable benefits...most damaging to knowledge-based organizations is the low level of emotional involvement."

Clearly, building a workforce that is adept at getting things done needs to be balanced through building a workforce climate which promotes a high degree of connectedness.

What should busy managers focus on in order to promote connectedness as a balancing force to a results only orientation? Consider the questions below.

Is time spent in relationship building a "measure" of accountability for you and your staff? Remember, what you measure is what your staff will focus on.

Do you discuss with your staff your philosophy on "how we will conduct business," meaning your expectations for what you want your team to be known for, especially in the areas of relationship building and collegiality.

Do you have a clear sense of what builds connectedness within your team?

- What "drives" the performance of your team and the individuals within the team? Can you sit down right now and draft a "values" map describing both?
- Have you asked your team what their individual interests are for their professional growth in the year ahead?
- Do you pursue both low level (supervisory) and high level (organizational) recognition of the contributions of your team and its members?
- Do you "go first" by building some degree of emotional connection with your team?
- If you have work to do in this area, remember author Susan Scott's adage, "the conversation is the relationship." What conversations do you need to have this week?

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SEPTEMBER 2010

"Unity of Purpose"

At different times throughout our careers we are faced with responsibility for leading change or leading through transition and crisis. When asked to comment on the "heart of lessons learned" from the Gulf oil spill, 9/11, Haiti earthquake and hurricanes Katrina and Rita, retired USCG Commandant Thad Allen recently commented that "You have to generate unity of purpose."

What Admiral Allen was referring to is a challenge we face frequently in our roles as Corporate and Executive Managers, how to bring together divergent points of view, mitigate the impact of competing agendas and sufficiently recognize vested interests in a way that facilitates agreement on what needs to be accomplished and by whom.

The importance of achieving "unity of purpose" is evident as well, in large scale change within our regulatory world. A recent Wall Street Journal article entitled "Tough Bank Rules Coming," reported on the work of the Basel Committee to negotiate revised global banking regulations concerning capital requirements which "would transform banking," noting that the "success of any accord would largely depend on trust among countries as they adopt the rules." Clearly, unity of purpose affects not only the immediate agreement on what is changing but also the execution or longer term implementation of what will be changed. Without unity of purpose at the starting point, successful execution is at risk. Stated more simply, change management efforts will fail.

Let's apply this to our roles as Corporate and Executive Managers. When faced with situations where change is inevitable and our ability to achieve unity of purpose is critical, what skills do we need? How should we prepare ourselves? What approach should we take? Here are a few key elements to consider.

Perspectives-Our Ability to Clearly Understand Multiple Perspectives on the Issue

- **Conduct a relationship scan**
The next time you are facing an informational or decision-making meeting on a specific change issue (policy, process, infrastructure, or culture change) take 20 minutes to draw a relationship map identifying the key individuals or key groups/teams who will have impact on implementing the change or who will be affected by the change. Write down what you know about their points of view, what they will win or lose, their readiness and willingness to change and their understanding of the rationale for the change. It will be very easy to identify where the gaps are in your understanding of the perspectives that are driving the motivations and actions of key stakeholders.

Asking the Right Questions-Our Ability to Pose Questions Which Bring to the Surface Divergent Points of View

- **Slow down**
Due to the nature of our regulatory work, we are extremely adept at execution. We move quickly into

action. This habit, which serves us very well in our technical work, may get in our way in situations where we need to till the ground to discover points of view, perspectives or vested interests.

Avoid the instinct to move quickly into discussions of "what needs to be done" and spend considerable time gathering input from key individuals or group representatives. This is sometimes called a "beach ball" conversation as your goal should be to recognize that, based on where you "sit" in the Corporation, you represent one stripe on a multicolored beach ball and your goal should be to articulate as many stripes as possible.

Consider conducting a "perspective gathering" meeting. Start the meeting with a clear purpose statement such as: "The reason we are meeting today is for all of us to have an opportunity to share how this (change) will affect you and your employees and to have clarity on what we know about the (change) and what we don't know. The question I would like you each to address is "what your current understanding of the (change) is and how this will affect you and your staff?" At the end of the meeting thank everyone for their input and explain your next steps.

Listening

- **Monitor Your Listening Skills**

Marshal Goldsmith, author of the book *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, reminds us that the higher we go in our leadership roles the less we should be hearing our own voice. The next time you are conducting an important meeting, monitor how much time you spend in "active listening." Active listening means you are fully focused on the person speaking, processing what they are saying and not distracted by your own thoughts or focused instead on your next comment. Our leadership positions automatically give us a "platform" to be heard from. Use it judiciously. Listen more.

Defusing Opposition

- **Represent Divergent Points of View**

One of the most powerful tools to defuse opposition is to make sure that the other points of view are articulated and given fair "air time." Feeling "heard" is often a fundamental starting point for an individual or group to be able to move away from an entrenched position. Recognizing, as well, what the individual or group needs to "let go of" and giving them time to process this transition stage are key steps in successful change management.

Clarity

- **Talk Straight With Respect**

Remember the 13 "trust behaviors?" Talking straight and being clear on what the boundaries are within the (change) situation, who has authority and responsibility for decision making, what key roles individuals will serve and how we will communicate out to our constituents sounds straightforward but are often missed.

Admiral Thad Allen illustrated setting boundaries in a recent NPR interview when he recalled, "I remember having a conversation with a parish president of Louisiana. I said there are two things that I cannot do. I can do everything with you, for you, and we can partner, but I cannot give you my federal authority and I cannot waive my fiduciary responsibility for appropriations."

Communicate clearly the "non-negotiables" associated with the (change), identify the areas where modifications, flexibility or accommodations are possible, negotiate timeframes and pace yourself to allow time for adjustment.

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AUGUST 2010

Feedback

"What is your feedback style?"

If someone asked you to describe your feedback style, what would you say? You may be inclined to offer information as to how and when you provide feedback to your staff but how much do you know about your style?

About six years ago, while conducting an executive leadership program at the Federal Executive Institute, I had the good fortune to meet Dr. Irv Rubin, who has spent most of his career studying effective feedback.

In his well-regarded book, "The ABCs of Effective Feedback: A Guide for Caring Professionals," he suggests that "in all interactions, human behavior falls into one of two categories reflecting our use of *push* or *pull* approaches."

Considering the pace and volume of our workload, our ability to offer effective and timely feedback to our staff becomes increasingly important. We have very little time to provide feedback and knowing how to do it well will help us manage one of our core duties in "leading performance."

Here is a "back of the envelope" overview of feedback styles.

We use "Push" approaches when our primary objective is to have our thoughts and feelings better understood by another person.

We use "Pull" approaches when our primary objective is to better understand another person's thoughts and feelings.

When I push in feedback conversations I do the following:

- *Describe* what has happened or what is happening;
- *Prescribe* what should happen or must happen in the future;
- *Appreciate* the significance of what has happened or is happening;
- *Inspire others* to collaborate toward achieving common goals.

When I pull in feedback conversations I do the following:

- *Attend* to the other person by making myself receptive to what the other person is trying to have me understand (mostly with non-verbal cues);
- Ask questions that will help the other person express thoughts, feelings, or ideas;
- Strive to *understand* the other person's message and demonstrate that understanding through verbal and non-verbal cues;
- *Empathize* with the other person's feelings.

To be effective in our feedback conversations we need to use both push and pull styles.

If you would like to learn more about your feedback styles through a 5-minute self-assessment, complete the attached questionnaire. The results may surprise you!

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JULY 2010

"Learning Curve"

Chances are that at some point this year you will find yourself working with new staff, new assignments, new deliverables, or serving new roles within the Corporation. In our conversations with experienced and new leaders, dealing with change and working with new staff are often at the top of the list of "leadership challenges" raised by team leaders, supervisors, and Corporate and Executive Managers.

The unique circumstances surrounding a transition to a new role, new responsibilities or a new organization is often referred to as a "learning curve." We use the term quite often and yet seldom define it. We know what it looks like... an employee (or ourselves) taking action or acting in a way that everyone around knows by instinct is contrary to what the situation or the role requires. We graciously give room to new employees or forgive ourselves by attributing well meaning but ill informed steps as a result of our "learning curve."

Exactly, what is a learning curve and what might we pay attention to in our leadership role as we guide new staff members or navigate our own careers in new settings?

Learning curves are fundamentally a period of time that we are using "old habits" (that served us well in our previous environment) in settings where these habits result in a temporary misalignment or mismatch within our new culture or new roles.

Learning curves associated with technical knowledge are often relatively short in duration and relatively easy to mitigate (processes and standard operating procedures are easily defined and illustrated). We address this quite well. Take for example the Corporate Employee Program. We invest significantly and successfully in the technical training and competency of our newest DSC and DRR employees.

Technical training is however only one side of the learning curve. We all have had an experience of having a new member of our team who is technically highly competent yet has difficulty working effectively within the team. The challenging aspect of their learning curve is associated with the "culture" of the organization which oftentimes encompasses three additional skills:

- Knowing how they should demonstrate their performance and competency;
- Understanding how they should approach building relationships;
- Developing an awareness of how to build influence within key relationships.

Tools and Tips for Guiding Your New Staff

Even in our "surge-paced" environment it is essential that we find time early on in the "induction" phase of a new employee to provide "learning curve" guidance. This is even true with employees who transfer into our divisions and offices from other roles within the Corporation.

Learning Curve Conversations

- Performance and Competency:
 - Early on have a conversation with your new staff member(s) clearly describing a fundamental tenet of demonstrating performance. They should demonstrate competency and credibility by meeting the core responsibilities of the position before expecting advancement or more complex assignments.
 - Be explicit. What would technical credibility and competency look like?
 - Remind your newest staff member(s) to spend their time making sure they are really good at the fundamentals, invest time in understanding what their managers and team members need and expect from them.

- Building relationships:
 - Guide your staff member to understand which relationships are critical and how to build their credibility. Their initial focus should be on peer to peer and managing up relationships.
 - Your employee should be able to answer the question "How do you contribute to the success of your peers and your manager?"
- Build influence:
 - Remind your staff member that the starting point for influence in any new organizational role is to demonstrate that they are highly competent at what they are there to do.
 - The next step is to build a reputation for being a "trusted advisor" with the ability to assist others, problem solve, and support their colleagues.
 - Encourage your employee to develop the ability to fully understand the perspectives and positions taken by others and to understand the impact they have on others. What "wake" do they create in their pace in the workplace, in their style of communicating, in how they deal with conflict?

Monitoring Your Employee's Progress

In the May 2010 publication, "Riding the Tiger," authors Ed Cohen and Priscilla Nelson identified three phases of employee retention: *contract phase*, *partnership phase* and *relationship phase*. In our high paced environment you can still monitor the learning curve and integration of your newer employees by looking for evidence of the following:

As an employee moves from the early "contract" phase (focus is on understanding tasks, measures for success, and adherence to expectations) the employee's initial normal skepticism about a new job begins to turn to increased confidence.

During the "partnership" phase you should see your employee begin to become willingly engaged in areas beyond the specific work assignments and demonstrate a commitment to contributing to "outcomes" of benefit to the team and not just the individual.

Your employee will reach a highly optimal "relationship" phase when the employee views the organization and its leaders as trusted advisors and will willingly take initiative to focus their efforts on transforming the organization by building towards a desired future state.

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JUNE 2010

"Getting to the Heart of the Matter"

The month of June brings us half way through another "Surge" year. By now you may be more and more aware that some of your staff may have used up their reserve and are at risk of running on empty. You may even begin to wonder if you are also showing initial signs of "burn out," oftentimes characterized by declining morale.

What should thoughtful leaders do to guide themselves and their people when energy is beginning to wane and commitments for "deliverables" must still be met?

Oddly enough, if you ask anyone if they are reaching "burn out," they will often deny it vociferously, thinking that admitting to burn out is synonymous with admitting they cannot meet performance expectations. Our first obstacle is to separate competency (the skills required to perform well) from circumstances beyond the control of the employee.

To be effective in discussing and addressing burn out, you will need to "get to the heart of the matter" by dealing first with the emotions brought on by an enduring crisis, finding a genuine way to boost morale while maintaining focus on performance.

Let me share an example.

In October 1999, a week before I was to conduct a site visit with one of my field teams in the Republic of Armenia, an armed terrorist gained access to the Parliament building in the capital city of Yerevan and assassinated the Prime Minister and seven of the more reform-minded leaders within the government. My field team had already endured a trying year working under brutal conditions of no electricity, heat, limited food supplies, and opposition to the government reform projects they were spearheading. The situation was complex as I knew that in spite of the terrible tragedy within the Armenian government, the expectations of the donor nation and donor agencies were still very much at the forefront. There was also an additional risk that anti-reform coalitions could and would take advantage of any lull in the efforts of our nation-wide teams to derail progress painstakingly made in the past 12 months.

What lessons learned can be shared and applied to our current circumstances within FDIC?

- Lead by beginning the conversation by "getting to the heart of the matter." We often start our conversations with our staff by focusing on performance (what we need to get done). Focus instead on the emotional climate of our crisis situation. Ask simply "How are we doing?" and then listen. Get in touch with the pulse of your team.
- Lead by acknowledging the cost or toll the crisis is taking on your team. "Go first." Be willing to make yourself vulnerable to your team by sharing with them the trade-offs you have had to make to work within the "Surge."

- Lead by reminding your team that you will not support "results at any cost." Then ask "How can we take care of ourselves while facing these performance demands?"
- Lead by identifying causes for celebration within the team. Create timely and meaningful events that recognize "milestones" that have already been met. If your staff can see how far they have come it will shorten the distance ahead.
- Lead by spending time on a routine basis drawing your attention and the attention of your staff to the contribution their efforts are making and the significant impact of their efforts "behind the scenes."
- Lead by reminding your staff that the "crisis" is a unique circumstance in their professional lives and should not become a "hole" that collapses their personal lives.

It is precisely at this point when the true meaning and value of morale becomes clear. Genuine conversations with your staff can "get to the heart of the matter" and provide much needed support as we turn the corner soon and celebrate having come through the surge together.

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MAY 2010

What do we mean by employee engagement?

"...perhaps transparency needs to be coupled with engagement."

The statement above was the closing line of a recent article on transparency in the federal government published in the May 5th on-line edition of the Government Executive column "Management Matters." The author failed to provide any clues as to what he meant by engagement. Although it seems we need more of whatever it is. This leads to the realization that there may be confusion as to what employee engagement means, how to measure it and how to understand who has responsibility for promoting it.

First, let's start with some recent statistics on employee engagement. (Tower and Perrin 2007-2008 Global Workforce Study). This study draws from data from (a) an on-line polling survey of 90,000 employees worldwide and (b) the largest employee normative database of 2 million employees in forty countries, including those with above and below-average performance.

- 41% of employees are "enrolled" meaning capable, caring and ready to be engaged.
- 30% are disenchanted, meaning capable but low on dimensions of caring and willingness to engage.
- 8% are actively disengaged, meaning demonstrates no positive connection to their organization.

Clearly the potential is obvious. Over 71% of the global workforce is in a state of readiness for engagement. In our own agency the employee engagement data continues to improve. Based on employee responses to the 2009 "All Employee Survey:"

- 89% of employees would recommend FDIC as a good place to work.
- 70% of employees agree that their supervisor supports their development.
- 70% of employees agree that their input is solicited and used by their supervisor when making decisions.

As we continue to promote employee engagement together, it might be helpful to have a shared understanding of what engagement is.

"A deep and broad connection that employees have with an organization that results in a willingness to go above and beyond what's expected of them to help their organization succeed." J. Gebauer and D. Lowman, 2006

What influences this willingness to perform at the highest levels?

"The connection needs to occur at three levels: the head (how well the employees understand their roles and responsibilities; the heart (how much passion and energy the employee brings to their work) and the hands (the motivation for performing their jobs well)." J. Gebauer and D. Lowman, 2006

What factors influence engagement? (Listed in descending order of impact.)

- Senior management's sincere interest in employee well-being.
- The opportunity an employee has to improve skills and capabilities.
- The organization's reputation for social responsibility.
- The opportunity an employee has to provide input into decision making in his/her division.
- The organization's ability to quickly resolve client/stakeholder concerns.
- An individual's own readiness to set high personal standards.
- Excellent career advancement opportunities.
- An individual's relationship with his/her supervisor.
- The organization's encouragement of innovation.

Who Gets it right?

Douglas Conant. In 2007, Douglas Conant took over as CEO of Campbell's Soup. In his effort to revitalize an ailing brand he told his managers "We need to focus on the workplace before we focus on the marketplace." "I'm obsessed with keeping engagement front and center and keeping up energy around it." In 2003 the ratio of engaged employees to disengaged was 2:1; in 2008 12:1.

Joseph Tucci. After September 11, 2001, EMC (\$13 billion technology organization) hit a low point in its 30 year history with losses of revenue close to 50%. *Business Week* magazine described the transformation of EMC as

"the most stunning turnaround in the history of technology." Joseph Tucci's motto: "Put EMC first, your people second and yourself third."

Sally Jewell. In 2007, 79% of REI (Recreational Equipment Incorporated) were characterized as highly engaged. REI has been designated by *Fortune* magazine as one of the top 100 best places to work for 11 years. Sally Jewell's instructions to her managers: *"Start with the premise that you trust employees to want to make the organization more effective."*

Your name! Picture your name here. What could we write about you in 2010?

Advice for Busy Managers:

Clearly employee engagement does influence performance and results. Busy managers should focus on 5 elements:

- **Know your employees**
 - Invest time in conversation. Commit to understanding what motivates your employees to be fully engaged and high performing. Ask them!
- **Grow your employees**
 - Provide timely information about learning and development opportunities. Encourage and accommodate their participation.
 - Solicit and welcome employee questions regarding organizational policies, changes, and direction.
- **Inspire your employees**
 - Manage with empathy, honesty and visibility while maintaining high performance standards. (Don't confuse being "liked" with being an effective leader).
 - Role-model acceptable and ethical behavior in every interaction.
 - Meet with direct reports one on one. Listen, refrain from judgment, and integrate what you learn into how you lead and how you manage.
 - Strive to be a best boss, not a best friend. Inform employees about why and how decisions were made.
 - Be visible and accessible in good times and bad times.
- **Involve your employees**

Communicate daily. Share relevant information that will better inform their activities and decisions.

 - Be clear, be timely and communicate frequently concerning your expectations for their performance. Partner on performance. Imagine the impact of asking "What do we need to accomplish together?"
 - Be a pipeline for the organization's big picture. You are the conduit for their deeper understanding of the longer term vision of FDIC.
 - Invite input and listen with an open mind. Ask direct reports "what can I do differently to create conditions where you can perform at your highest level?" Gather input into how FDIC can improve.
 - Empower staff to make decisions and contribute input to decisions above their level of responsibilities.

Employees who feel heard are able to manage change with greater ease than employees who are left to react to change "handed down."
- **Reward Them**
 - Reward regularly, as deserved, show direct reports sincere, knowledgeable appreciation and give them fact-based feedback.

All by Myself?

Before we jump to the conclusion that employee engagement stems mostly from management driven action let's pay attention to a rarely discussed element of employee engagement.

Employee Engagement is a two-way street.

"Employees need to help their managers and their organization know their individual preferences, seek growth opportunities, and collaborate with colleagues." J. Gebauer and D. Lowman, 2008

What Should Employees Do?

- **Know yourself and others**
 - Know what drives you to be fully engaged and high performing and share that information with your supervisor and colleagues.
 - Make an effort to understand what drives your coworkers, so when you are working together or on teams, you can more effectively communicate and collaborate.
 - Make an effort to understand what drives your boss and the types of performance pressure she/he is dealing with.
- **Grow yourself and others**

- Raise your hand. Actively seek out assignments, new roles or mentors rather than waiting for learning opportunities or people to find you.
- Embrace challenge. Look for a lesson in every step, and take ownership of your actions.
- Take advantage of learning and development opportunities.
- Ask your manager to identify areas of strength and opportunities for growth.
- Be honest with yourself. Know your strengths and develop your growth areas.
- **Inspire yourself and others**
 - Inspire laterally by making colleagues feel valued and valuable.
 - Provide positive feedback to your supervisor. We often miss this opportunity to "inspire up."
 - Be a leader/follower. Know when to step up and lead, know when to yield the lead and follow. Understand how to practice effective "followership."
- **Involve yourself and others**
 - Think strategically. Understand how you fit into the mission of FDIC. Understand how the decisions you make and the work that you do contribute to the mission and goals of FDIC.
 - Be proactive, and a compatible collaborator. Get to know people throughout FDIC.
 - Assist others when they need help.
 - Look for ways to improve.
 - Provide constructive feedback to colleagues. (You will know you are doing this when colleagues come to you for advice in difficult situations.)
- **Reward yourself and others**
 - When you reach a milestone or achieve an important outcome- celebrate. Don't wait for others. They simply may be too busy to have noticed.
 - Recognize colleagues for work done well.
 - Know yourself. Be honest about what is most important to you. Let your supervisor and colleagues know what you value most in the workplace. What gives you the greatest sense of recognition or reward? Don't make them guess.

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APRIL 2010

Finding Your Pace: Leadership Endurance Strategies

"There are times when I have to ask my family to remind me what day it is."

This comment by one of our DRR field managers during a recent site visit reflects the intensity of the pace and performance demands we continue to face as we move through another "surge" year.

In long-term crisis settings we initially rely on tried and true performance habits. We exert more effort to meet performance demands. Although effective in the short term, eventually we will all reach a point where we have used up our "excess capacity." Increased effort merely pushes us into an ineffective and costly state of exhaustion.

At this point we realize that a different leadership strategy is required to guide our performance and that of our staff. We need to adopt a strategy which reflects our ability to find our pace and model leadership endurance to address the unique circumstances of long term strain and excessive performance demands.

How do we pace ourselves in crisis? We posed this question to Ambassador Nathaniel Howell, who faced a 134-day "siege" of the U.S. embassy in Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion from August 2 to December 1990. Building on the strategy he shared to model "endurance" and "pacing" we offer specific steps which may be helpful to us in the weeks and months ahead.

- **Manage the unpredictable** by developing "work arounds." Invite your staff to contribute to defining strategies and solutions for dealing with situations you and they have never faced before.
- **Avoid "useless worry."** Focus on what needs to be done in the "immediate" term. Keep central goals in mind and dismiss any anxiety that leads you past what you cannot "influence."
- **Pace your staff.** Your high performers will reach burn out quickly and other staff may not possess a sufficient level of resilience under stress. Monitor each other (including you) by establishing a "buddy system."
- **Be prepared to practice independent decision making.** Advice from decision-makers far removed from the circumstances you are facing may not always be possible. Prepare yourself to make decisions that suit the realities you are facing but know this probably will not get you promoted. (Advice to AMB Howell, from the Department of State Crisis Taskforce, to generate electricity by taking turns riding a bicycle hooked up to a generator in the 110F heat of Kuwait was quickly dismissed.)

- **Leverage purpose.** There is nothing more motivating than a sense of purpose during crisis. Find a way to boost the energy of your people by linking them to the contribution their efforts make.
- **Pace yourself.** Balance your accessibility with your staff and the need for time away from your leadership role. Schedule a time each day to disconnect.
- **Delegate.** Before you take on responsibility for execution ask yourself who might be the person on your staff who would be most suited to take on this responsibility for you. If you use too much of your emotional and intellectual energy on execution you will diminish your reserve to lead. Remember your people are relying on you to be a focused leader who pays attention to strategically navigating the crisis. Stay out of the weeds.
- **Create small victories.** Find reasons to celebrate "making it through." Create these opportunities. You may need to be the person who schedules and organizes these events as your people will more likely be weighted down by the demands of the crisis and even "grumble" at the thought of taking "time out."
- **Manage Expectations.** When the fire hose is turned on above you, you are the only person who can buffer this for your staff. If you can't say "No," negotiate by collaboratively shifting priorities.
- **Lighten Up.** Long-term crisis is a weighty burden. Over time morale can diminish and everyone can lose perspective when facing a constant "grind" to execute or endure uncertainty. Humor is a great stress reliever.
- **Know you can live with and survive the crisis.** Create a sense that the "end point" that is important is not the end of the crisis but reaching the end of the crisis with the team intact. "We know we will get through this together, the only question for us is how." That is the point when you need to listen to your staff and let them inform the "how."

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MARCH 2010

"Leading People"

"Plans don't accomplish work. Goal charts on walls don't accomplish work...it is people who get things done... At the end of the day it is some soldier who will go up the hill and correct your mistakes and take that hill." (Colin Powell - "Leadership Secrets of Colin Powell".)

As we look ahead at another year within a "Surge" state, I doubt any of us need to be reminded that our success rests on the ability of our people to manage an unrelenting workload and our ability to sustain them by leading effectively.

It isn't a coincidence that this month's leadership quote reflects the view of a seasoned military commander and diplomat who throughout his career stood where we are today. Realizing the climb to "take the hill" is steep, the battle will be long, and we need to get our people to the other side, Secretary Powell's strategy for leading people is timely and relevant.

Count on people more than plans or structures.

It is the led who validate the effectiveness of the leader. Vision is the starting point. Effective leaders inspire their people, reward accountability and performance, pay attention to morale and continually reinforce a shared sense of purpose.

Assume that people are competent and that every job counts.

Do you catch your people "doing something right"? Do you "lend them your confidence" in order to create a bridge to higher levels of competence? Do you value the contributions of all of your staff?

Spend at least 50 percent of your time on your people.

Jack Welch and Michael Dell reportedly spent 50 -75 percent of their time on "people" issues.

View people as partners, regardless of their place in the hierarchy.

Are you able to see every person on your team as a "partner" who can offer expertise to help you reach critical performance goals? How would you invite them to partner with you?

Advocate. Work for your people.

Do your people see your role as their advocate? Recall Covey's findings that we build trust when we work in the interest of others. Do you realize that you need to let your staff know of your efforts on their behalf? This shouldn't be your best kept secret.

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JANUARY 2010

Vision

"The best way to lead people into the future is to connect with them deeply in the present".

This sentiment captured in a 2009 Harvard Business Review essay by Leadership Professors, James Kouzes and Barry Posner is worth reflecting on as we approach the leadership challenges that lay ahead of us in 2010.

One of the most significant requirements reported by employees for their leaders is that he or she be "forward looking." If you read this sentence and realize that you probably need to spend more time thinking about the future, you are not alone. The typical business leader spends only 3% of their time envisioning. Kouzes and Posner surveyed over one-million leaders and realized that what leaders struggle with most is communicating an image of the future that draws others in.

This raises many important questions for us.

How can we be "forward looking" when the performance demands draws us into the intensity of the short-term horizon?

What steps do we need to take to strengthen our connection to our employees in order to develop a shared vision of how we will navigate the year ahead?

How do we find the time and energy to focus ourselves and our employees on a future we plan to think about once we are "through the surge?"

There are always numerous ways to approach any dilemma. Here are a few options to consider:

- Vision in a crisis setting should focus on how we will navigate our way through the immediate circumstance and address what is foremost on the minds of your staff.
- Find time to simply ask your staff that question. What is foremost on your minds as we navigate the year ahead? Your leadership role then becomes how to incorporate their needs with the Corporation's needs and articulate your "vision" in a way that speaks to both.
- To strengthen your connection to your staff, check in often. You need to be present, to offer your time to listen and to express in ways that are genuine, that you care.
- Look beyond the surge. This is the difference between managing and leading strategically and demonstrates "leadership thinking." One of our next transitions will be a return to "steady state." There may not be any immediate actions you need to take but thinking about and anticipating how your "vision" will need to change and the timing of when to begin to recognize that this is now the issue foremost on the minds of your staff; these are critical next steps.

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Leadership Best Practices

The School of Leadership Development presents pragmatic and useful "best leadership practices" for employees.

["Change versus Transition" - December 2011](#)
["Leading in 2012 and Beyond" - November 2011](#)
["The Power of Purpose" - October 2011](#)
["The Responsibility for Employee Engagement" - September 2011](#)
["Leadership and Climate Setting" - August 2011](#)
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DECEMBER 2011

Change versus Transition

"Without a Transition, a Change is Just a Rearrangement of the Furniture" - William Bridges

As we move through the holidays and ring in the New Year, organizations and individuals alike will follow the well known tradition of setting goals to make changes for 2012. So what can get in the way of accomplishing these initiatives? -- Understanding that change is not transition.

In his book, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*, William Bridges eloquently distinguishes the two:

Our society confuses them constantly, leading us to imagine that *transition* is just another word for *change*. But it isn't. *Change* is your move to a new city or your shift to a new job. It is the birth of your new baby or the death of your father. It is the switch from the old health plan at work to the new one, or the replacement of your manager by a new one, or it is the acquisition that your company just made.

In other words, *change* is situational. *Transition*, on the other hand, is psychological. It is not those events, but rather the inner reorientation and self-redefinition that you have to go through in order to incorporate any of those changes into your life. Without a transition, a change is just a rearrangement of the furniture. Unless transition happens, the change won't work, because it doesn't "take." Whatever word we use, our society talks a lot about change; but it seldom deals with transition. Unfortunately for us, it is the transition that blind-sides us and is often the source of our troubles.

Bridges explains that transition starts with an ending. Rather than immediately getting on with the new circumstances, people face a period of adaptation. Leaders need to realize that the transition process involves a time of difficulty, often fraught with self-doubt, ambiguity, and uncertainty. People may be reluctant to accept the reality that something is ending, refusing to let go of the familiar and learn about the new. When you or someone in the organization is struggling with change, take time to acknowledge transition by exploring what has been lost and what is getting in the way of adapting.

The authors of the book *Leading with Authenticity in Times of Transition*, Kerry A. Bunker and Michael Wakefield, describe bringing about change as the ability to manage an initiative or change, generate acceptance and support, and see things through. Coping with transition involves the ability to recognize and address the personal and emotional fallout that accompanies change. They outline the following steps you can take to strike a balance between bringing about change and coping with transition:

- **Communicate.** Effective leaders are relentless communicators. Find many ways to share information and keep processes open and transparent. Talk about your thoughts and feelings. Good communicators are also good listeners, so pay attention both to what is said and to what is not said.
- **Don't dismiss the old.** Ignoring, demeaning, or dismissing the way things used to be prevents people from moving through the transition process. Help people through transition by acknowledging their history and attachments.

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- **Make yourself more visible.** If you communicate well, you won't be out of sight. But be sure to be visible and accessible as much as possible; people can't be influenced by behavior they don't see. You must find ways to interact with all of your stakeholder groups.
- **Be genuine.** This involves making more of yourself available. Let people see who you are. What kind of person are you in times of stress, crisis, and change? This involves taking off the masks or armor you have put on over the years and being real with people.
- **Reinforce authenticity.** Learn to recognize and reinforce authentic, resilient behavior patterns in others.
- **Find inspiration.** You need your own touchstones or reminders about what you are trying to accomplish, what your problems are, and how you want to behave.

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NOVEMBER 2011

Leading in 2012 and Beyond

The new normal is sneaking up on us. It hasn't arrived just yet, but we are beginning to see the rough outline of things to come. In many areas our corporate workload has started to stabilize as the aftershocks of the financial crisis are dissipating. Barring a new wave of instability from overseas, there is light at the end of the tunnel. But what type of future does the light represent and how will we adapt to it?

As leaders we "...must learn how to make the future in the midst of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA)..." says Bob Johansen in Leaders Make the Future. As an organization the FDIC's ability to operate effectively in Johansen's VUCA environment will in large measure be determined by the foresight, flexibility and adaptability of leaders at all levels.

The key metrics the public will use to measure Federal sector leaders and their organizations in the weeks, months and years ahead are based on three interconnected competencies:

- Executing priorities with excellence.
- Restoring/retaining public trust.
- Achieving more with less.

On the surface, executing priorities with excellence seems to be a fairly straight forward task until we factor in the VUCA world in which we are operating. With significant volatility remaining in the financial sector, uncertainty of the ripple effects of new legislation and regulations, ever-increasing levels of complexity in the work we do, and ambiguity as to what the future may hold, the only constant is change.

It appears, as the new normal emerges, that the pace of change will not significantly slow. As leaders we must prepare ourselves and our workforce to deal with the ambiguity that change brings. Trevor Kennedy says "... providing meaning and structure [makes] people feel good and [gives] them motivation ... clarity of goals and purpose... combined with the sense of belonging to a group [are] the characteristics that [give] most employees a high motivation... [while] Ambiguity [leads] to anxiety and fear" (*The Australian August 04, 2011*).

To counter the VUCA forces that are impacting our work, leaders must foster in themselves and their employees resilience, adaptability and a willingness to take risk. Leaders should help employees:

- See change not as a threat, but as an opportunity - with no challenge being insurmountable.
- Recognize that when the old fix or remedy doesn't work, or only serves as a bandaid, that proposing an adaptive solution to the situation is both welcomed and encouraged.
- Know when and how to take risks and that doing so will be respected regardless of the outcome.

If it were a brand name, FDIC would certainly have the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval. The Corporation's impact on the consumer over the last 78 years cannot be understated. Yet we have work ahead of us; we must help restore trust in the financial sector and apply our "brand" in a new sector (too big to fail corporations) as we implement the provisions of the Dodd/Frank legislation.

VUCA's impact on trust cannot be underestimated. Low confidence reduces the speed of interactions and increases time, energy and cost. To boost trust in the organization, leaders must create both internal and external conditions for fostering transparency, keeping commitments and extending trust to others. Steven R. Covey and Bob Whitman found that the most successful organizations were those that confront VUCA by actively and deliberately building trust, showing more transparency than ever before, and acting swiftly.

In addressing achieving more with less, Covey and Whitman say the real question is "...more of what? Shouldn't it be more of ... what employees value...?" Even in tough times (perhaps especially in tough times), people want to contribute, they want to help, they want to make a difference. The leader's task in a VUCA world is to create a "contribution-focused" workforce.

During his August presentation to FDIC leaders at the Chairman's Leadership Series, noted author Dan Pink presented convincing evidence that motivation is directly related to the purpose being served, the ability to have a say in how things are done, and the opportunity the employee has for performance improvement. Pink's talk (Drive) provides insights on how leaders who foster employee autonomy, mastery and purpose can create the contribution-focused workforce.

Confronted with a VUCA world, our workforce is one that is fully committed and eager to make a difference. If properly engaged and empowered, our employees will self-discover ways to effectively and efficiently increase productivity while responding to fiscal constraints with improved methods of resource allocation.

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OCTOBER 2011

The Power of Purpose

Does your team understand the purpose of the work the way that you do? When leading experienced workers, we are often lulled into a sense that everyone is in the same boat rowing in unison. Yet without a clearly articulated purpose statement we leave our employees to "guess" what we want done and how it should be accomplished. In Common Purpose: How Great Leaders Get Organizations to Achieve the Extraordinary, Joel Kurtzman writes: "... we need ... leaders who can create a sense of common purpose so everyone executes and everyone leads."

The purpose statement is not about a specific task or goal; rather, in a relatively concise document of a page or two, it spells out the leader's philosophy in terms of vision, expectations, and support. The purpose statement provides a foundation for the team or group serving as a touch-point from which all actions and decisions are made.

It begins by articulating the vision, not an enterprise wide vision, but a vision for how the team/group will work together to accomplish the unit's mission. This may take some introspection – how do you see mission achievement? In his book Visionary Leadership, Burt Nanus contends that vision must be idealistic and serve as a "mental model of (the) future state of the ... organization." When clearly articulated, the vision provides a rallying point enabling others to take action in your absence.

Having defined the vision, what expectations do you hold for how employees approach the work? What behaviors are necessary to effectively accomplish the mission? What type of workplace climate do you want to foster? Short clearly defined expectations about meeting the vision through teamwork, professionalism, continuous learning, etc, can set the stage for a healthy workplace climate.

While it is not the only driver of performance, Harvard researchers George Litwin and Robert Stringer have estimated that climate accounts for nearly a third of productivity. A well written and executed purpose statement fosters all the dimensions that Litwin and Stringer found to be predictors of increased employee motivation and performance.

The final step in developing a purpose statement is to formulate your role in helping employees fulfill your expectations and meet the vision. By clearly spelling out what you will do to support their ability to meet the expectations, employees are better able to comprehend how they will be led. For example if one of your expectations is that employees will keep themselves current on regulatory policy, you will likely have to ensure that they not only have access to the policy but also to policy interpretation, execution, enforcement, etc. A statement such as: "I will ensure that all aspects of policy are clearly defined and everyone is appropriately trained," provides reassurance that you are engaged and looking out for the best interests of your employees.

Tips for writing a purpose statement:

1. Make the vision as compelling and inclusive as possible. Consider using phrases like: "As a high performance team, we will..." or "As professionals in the Division of ..., we shall..."
2. Expectations should express the behavior(s) necessary to achieve the desired result. Consider an introductory statement such as: "I expect everyone to contribute to the vision by..."
3. When outlining how you will support your employees start by saying "the team may rely on me to..." or "the team can count on me..."
4. Be succinct. Refine your draft to a single sheet of paper if possible. This will result in clear guidance that is easy for everyone to remember.
5. Once you have written your purpose statement, it is important to share with staff. Allow the staff to provide input for clarification, but avoid changing the intent of the vision or the spirit of the expectations.
6. Make the purpose statement one of the first things you discuss with new employees.

The Power of Purpose was written by Basil Read, School of Leadership Development faculty. Basil recommends reading the Executive Summary of Common Purpose: How Great Leaders Get Organizations to Achieve the Extraordinary, by Joel Kurtzman, which is available on the Skillport web page at "books 24x7".

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SEPTEMBER 2011

The Responsibility for Employee Engagement

Information about employee engagement seems to appear everywhere these days. In 12: The Elements of Great Managing, authors Wagner and Harter identify the following 12 key elements to employee engagement:

1. Show them how their work directly connects to the mission.
2. Provide employees with the actual tools and resources they need to perform their job; don't make them scrounge, hoard, or steal to get their job done.
3. Foster teams that succeed and do quality work so each person has a sense of belonging, success, and pride.
4. Provide real opportunities for each person to learn and grow as a person.
5. Provide compliments, recognition, and public pats on the back.
6. Listen to employee opinions and implement the really good ones.
7. Ensure employees know what is expected not only in the tasks of their job, but in all of its ramifications and under a range of circumstances.
8. Talk with each employee about their progress as part of your everyday work rather than only at the annual interview. Use the interview to review accomplishments and set next year's goals.
9. Be sure employees understand a career path and are developing new skills.

10. Do your best to let the employee use their best talents in their work. Fit the job to what they do best rather than making them fit themselves to get a job done.
11. Foster an environment where people feel cared about.
12. Create a culture where each person feels that coming to work allows them to be with one of their best friends.

The elements seem to be employer-based actions, and I agree that employers, supervisors, and managers must lay the foundation for engagement. Interestingly, the 2010 FDIC All Employee Survey cites the FDIC strengths as: mission and strategy; perceptions of leadership by the Board of Directors and Headquarters Senior Leadership; Teams (Division/Office Leadership Teams and Regional/Area/TSO Management Teams); immediate supervisors; the work environment and work/life balance. These strengths appear to align well with the first five critical elements. The employee survey also lists three "potential opportunities to continue to improve," citing empowerment, performance management, and career development. Elements six through ten could provide insight into how we may improve in these areas.

However, employer actions alone cannot create engagement. It's hard to imagine an engaged workforce if employees have no responsibility for their attitudes or actions. Graham Lowe, in *Creating Healthy Organizations*, says "Engagement is above and beyond simple satisfaction with the employment arrangement or basic loyalty to an employer. Engagement is about the willingness to invest oneself and expend one's discretionary effort to help the employer succeed." He states that engaged employees set high standards for themselves and they channel their passion for their work and their commitment to the organization into how they work with others, how they acquire skills and knowledge, and how they anticipate and respond to internal and external change. Challenging thoughts for personal reflection.

Perhaps the real truth in employee engagement lies in a combination of both employer and employee behaviors and responsibilities. The Culture Change Council should be applauded for their continuing work that most surely contributes to the cited FDIC strengths, and aligns well with several, if not all, of the 12 elements of engagement. The ongoing initiatives include ten goals for continuing progress. Our "FACE-IT" campaign challenges us, as employees, to face up to our part of the engagement paradigm. Fairness, accountability, competence, effectiveness, integrity, and teamwork are not merely a list of values. Our behaviors, as representatives of the FDIC, reflect our passion and commitment, or lack thereof, to the values. A positive attitude and appreciation of what can be learned through our experiences deepens the psychological state of feeling inspired and engaged. Have you set goals for continued improvement? Only when both employer and employee take responsibility can employee engagement be truly achieved.

To learn more about employee engagement, Corporate University's leadership development faculty recommends:

- [The Culture Change](#) web page for an overview of the latest updates and information
- The [Skillport](#) web page at "books 24x7;" search "employee engagement"
- Lowe, G. (2010). *Creating Healthy Organizations: How Vibrant Workplaces Inspire Employees to Achieve Sustainable Success*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press
- Wagner, R., and Harter, J.K. (2006). *12: The Elements of Great Managing*. New York: Gallup Press

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AUGUST 2011

Leadership and Climate Setting

Over the past few years, the FDIC has made tremendous strides in changing its organizational culture creating a shared set of expectations and workplace behaviors. The Corporation's culture resonates through core values that provide a sense of "how we do things here." While we celebrate the strides we have collectively made in culture improvement, leaders must not overlook the importance of climate. If culture is the macro-view of how things are in the organization then climate is the micro-view of how things seem to be for the individual.

The character (actual behavior) of the leader is the most crucial factor in creating workplace climate, as his/her actions influence both the individual's and the team's motivation and satisfaction. Essentially everything you do as a leader will affect the climate in which your employees operate.

The day-to-day leadership style of the leader is one of the most important factors in developing a positive organizational climate. While there are several factors that contribute to climate, this essay will focus on three areas that best align with FDIC's values and the core principles of effective leadership: Standards of Behavior, Communication, and Organizational Connectedness.

Standards of Behavior – For the leader, standards of behavior are defined as what will be observed or heard. It is important for the leader to model and promote acceptable behavior for both him/herself and the team through on-going feedback, observation(s) of behavior and the performance review process. Demonstrating and holding others accountable for standards of behavior is an important aspect of creating a positive and safe workplace environment.

Communication – Fostering acceptable behavior begins and ends with effective communication. Acceptable behaviors show up in the form of timely and open feedback, mistake/failure tolerance, and demonstrated mutual respect. The lack of communication and/or poor communication often show up in the workplace as focusing on problems instead of solutions, placing blame instead of accepting responsibility, and generating rumor(s), gossip, and criticism that seek to tear down rather than build up a sense of mutual respect and teamwork.

Organizational Connectedness – Building shared meaning is the cornerstone to positive climate setting. It is a proven technique used to bridge together all of our forms of diversity. Employees tend to connect themselves with their professions, occupations, titles, agencies, and teams. Understandably as a result subcultures often

grow. Bridging the gaps across these subcultures and aligning individuals with diverse points of view and perspectives helps create a positive and highly productive and effective workplace climate. Effective leaders look for opportunities to build connectedness within their teams and among individuals.

Climate represents the individual's beliefs about the "feel of the organization." The leader's ability to positively influence the individual, create job satisfaction, and increase team motivation is directly linked to the climate. As you think about the workplace climate in your office ask:

- How well do I clarify priorities and goals?
- Have I established clear expectations for job performance and workplace behavior?
- How do I recognize and reward performance?
- Do my employees view my feedback as intended to help them improve their performance?
- Do I use employee mistakes as learning opportunities?
- Do my employees view me as approachable and caring?

To learn more about leadership and understanding groups, Corporate University's leadership development faculty, Dr. Jeffrey Ash, recommends, Roderic Gray's *A Climate of Success: Creating the right Organization Climate for High Performance* found on Corporate University's Skillsoft (Books 24/7)

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JULY 2011

Feedback

When we hear the term feedback we immediately think of PMR, formal counseling, and the like. We tend to forget that we are giving and receiving feedback with each and every interaction. Our routine informal encounters with employees, peers and those we report to leaves an impression behind. What are people gathering from your actions, interactions and reactions in these everyday encounters? Are you providing unintended signals? Are you missing an opportunity to provide meaningful feedback?

When the server at a restaurant asks "How is everything?" most people tend to respond with an ambiguous answer such as "fine" or "good" rather than something more meaningful such as "the service is slower/better than I anticipated, the sauce is tangy/bland, or the experience was adequate, but it didn't meet my expectations."

Everyday professional interactions often resemble the waiter-customer kabuki dance of an insincere question receiving an insincere response such as: "How's the report coming along?" – "Fine." What would your reaction be two days later when you learn that the report isn't so fine after all and now the deadline for submission is near at hand? Wouldn't you rather have known there was a potential problem 48 hours ago?

We want to be curious with our questions and ask them in an open-ended way that is likely to elicit actionable responses. A well placed question provides an opportunity for both parties to engage in meaningful feedback. For example instead of asking "How's the report coming along?" one might ask "What difficulties are you encountering in compiling the report?"

Being receptive to information is easy when we receive good news but can be more difficult when we are confronted with an adverse message. Our reaction to bad news directly impacts the timing and packaging of the message. The more negative our actions are in response to adverse situations (displays of disappointment, anger, sarcasm, etc.), the more likely the information will not only arrive later than necessary but it will be delivered in a manner which may not enable us to immediately see the full impact.

Receptivity and approachability go hand in hand. If we can control our emotions in light of bad news, actively listen to the problem, and help the messenger develop a workable solution, we are likely to learn of issues when they are speed bumps versus road blocks.

By being intentional and consistent in our interactions we can create a climate that fosters professional relationships. If people sense in your everyday interactions that your feedback is meant to strengthen their performance they will be more receptive and proactive in response to your advice and direction.

Transparency is in many ways the key to everyday feedback. When people sense that there is a hidden agenda or that there is only lip service to their concerns they will be less forthcoming. Their ability to process and embrace direction diminishes when they believe the stated reason is insincere. Similarly, the reaction to the feedback we direct to our peers and those we report to is impacted by their perception of our agenda.

In *The ABCs of Effective Feedback*, Irv Rubin (a presenter in CU's School of Leadership Development) recommends a three step approach to timely feedback that will minimize emotion getting in the way of the message:

- Describe your observation of what has happened in the past or is happening in the moment.
- Appreciate the significance or value, to you personally, of what you have just described.
- Prescribe your suggestions and proposals for what could, should, or needs to happen in the future.

If we apply Rubin's three step approach with curiosity, receptivity, intentionality and transparency we can create a climate in which everyday feedback flourishes as a tool that enhances professionalism and productivity in the workplace.

For the leader, this involves a delicate balance of both transformational leadership (getting employees to want to change behaviors) and transactional leadership (using incentives and rewards to enhance productivity). To be successful leaders must employ both of these techniques to enhance individual performance as well as the interactions amongst the members of the group.

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JUNE 2011

Leadership and Understanding Groups

In any organization, leaders commit a great deal of time, energy and resources towards setting and striving to reach designated goals and objectives. All too often not as much time and commitment is made to understand what is happening between and within the group's greatest asset - its members.

For the leader, this involves a delicate balance of both transformational leadership (getting employees to want to change behaviors) and transactional leadership (using incentives and rewards to enhance productivity). To be successful leaders must employ both of these techniques to enhance individual performance as well as the interactions amongst the members of the group.

While it is important to focus on achieving goals and objectives, it is equally critical to make sure that group member needs and concerns are addressed. Being a member of an organizational workgroup offers opportunities for an employee to build personal self-confidence, build his or her own leadership capacity, and in many cases make friends. While all of these can occur simultaneously, they likely will not occur by themselves without the leader purposely focusing on the group and its members.

Highly effective organizations consistently look at how members of a group work together, and examine both the formal and informal roles and contributions. Elements of an organization that typically influence groups are: communication, participation, decision-making, and role fulfillment. Consider the following:

Communication

As a leader of a group, be mindful of: Who talks, for how long, and how often, who interrupts, who sits where and why, to whom members of the group look at when talking. Observation of these interactions may offer great insight into the inner workings of really understanding the group and its work.

Participation

Be mindful of who participates, create conditions where employees want to participate and feel safe.

Decision-Making

Be consistent and transparent in delegating decision-making authority. Don't proclaim to be an expert when you do not have the necessary expertise.

Role Fulfillment

Consider the team at large, who does what, when and where. What is the how and why behind each individual's role fulfillment. Taking the time to explain the why behind why assignments are generated and to whom is an important step in achieving clarity around the purpose. In today's diverse workplace, people are no longer motivated by rewards and/or consequences alone. The effective transactional leader works to create clear structures whereby expectations of role fulfillment is clear.

To maximize the productivity and results of the work group, leaders must consider four key thoughts:

- Develop an understanding of what motivates individual employees versus what motivates the group.
- Ensure that employees understand what is at stake and understand the rewards, recognition, and accountability for their actions within the group.
- Continuously provide feedback to all members of the group about their work – addressing both their formal and informal position within the group.
- Understand transactional leadership will not necessarily yield the same results with each individual or group.

Thirty years of research and a number of studies (Bass & Bass, 2008) have uncovered the importance of understanding the inner workings of groups and the positive impacts in performance and team functions. Balancing both transactional and transformational leadership approaches when leading and understanding groups offers more than individual gain, it also inspires the group and gives the group a greater sense of identity, purpose, and clarity in roles, tasks, and functions.

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MAY 2011

Experience Matters

In his book, *My American Journey*, former Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell described his formula for decision making as P = 40 to 70. Powell believes that good leaders can harness their experience and make correct decisions based on only 40 to 70 percent of the relevant information. Powell notes that leaders who wait until they have 100 percent of the details often make decisions that are too late to have the desired impact.

This concept of making decisions based on the information at hand and personal experience is nothing new, we do it all of the time. We instinctively recognize patterns and act without all the details. When an oncoming car starts to drift into our lane, we don't wait to see if the other driver will correct his steering nor hold on to see if we'll be hit, we unconsciously decide to act. Similarly, a savvy investor analyzes market trends and, based on experience, consciously adjusts his portfolio. If the investor were to wait to see if a particular stock actually gains or loses value before investing/divesting, he would miss the window of opportunity for making a significant profit or minimizing his losses.

Good decision makers rely on a combination of deliberate and instinctive thinking. They gather the information that is available, perform the analysis that time allows and leverage their instinct to act.

Leveraging instinct does not imply that one simply goes with what your gut suggests. Rather it is using your experience to fill in the missing pieces. When someone says that something doesn't look or feel right, they are actually implying that the details don't match their experience patterns. Instinctively they know something is wrong. Either a fundamental piece or pieces of information are missing, or there are one or more flaws in the details.

The more experience patterns a decision maker has the more accurate they will be in responding correctly to incomplete information sets. Leaders can increase their accuracy in making good decisions without all the details by asking themselves the following questions:

- Where have I seen a similar circumstance or pattern?
- What are the risks, consequences and benefits of making a decision now?
- What questions do I really need answered, and where can I find them?
- What will it cost me and my organization if I delay?

While pattern experience leads to confidence in making sound decisions with only part of the information, overconfidence can lead to diminished accuracy. Overconfidence happens when the decision maker acts on partial information without an experience pattern.

There is an easy way to test your accuracy in making decisions based on partial information. Start today by keeping note of what you think the action should be for every decision you choose to delay until you have more information. At the end of 90 days go back and look at your notes. Were the end decisions essentially the same as what you wrote down each time you chose to delay? If there was additional detail in the final decision, would your original decision have sufficed? Could the detail have been added later? What was the cost of the delay in terms of your time and the time of your staff? Now identify the decisions that you delayed that wound up being nearly identical to the decision you wrote down; these are the type of actions where you have existing experience patterns.

Making decisions without all the information does carry some risk and risk should never be discounted. As you formulate a decision, take the risk into account and include reasonable safeguards to monitor or mitigate undesired outcomes. If you are still concerned about the risk, a simple rule of thumb is to only make partial information decisions that leverage your experience patterns when the benefit clearly outweighs the risk or when a delay in action could have severe consequences.

Bottom line, learning to use a combination of deliberate and instinctive thinking pays dividends in terms of time and energy saved for you and those you lead.

To learn more about following one's instincts in decision making, Corporate University's Leadership Development faculty recommend Malcolm Gladwell's book *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. Note: An Executive Summary of this Book is available for download in print and audio formats from the SkillPort tab on the Corporate University website.

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APRIL 2011

Leadership and Renewal

After months of subfreezing temperatures, springtime has finally arrived! There is a wonderful refreshing sense of renewal seeing trees beginning to blossom, and feeling the warm gentle breeze from the intensity of the sun. Our seasons go through a natural seamless progression of change and renewal, an awakening, if you will. Leaders go through seasons of change as well with the political, economic, technological, and social climate in and around the organization constantly shifting. In anticipating these seasons of change, renewal is critical in maintaining a highly motivated and energized workforce.

So what is renewal and why is it important in leadership? Simply put, renewal is taking an intentional and deliberate step back, to spend time away from our daily selves and tasks to gain new insights and new thinking. Several studies have proven there is a need and there are benefits of renewal. Harvard Business Review, (Schwartz, McCarthy, 2007) and (Charan, Tichy, 1998) discovered when an organization is fine with its success, and its leaders do not take a step back for renewal, its people and products are effected in terms of opportunities missed and organizational loss.

When in success mode, an organization can lose sight of the periphery, thus, success becomes a trap. Without the intentional time for renewal, the organization loses sight of when it may be time to rethink, redo, and look for new approaches. Consequently, when our minds, bodies, and spirits are allowed the time for renewal, we become more open to new ideas and, as neurological research suggests, innovative thinking. It is not an exaggeration to say that renewal is tantamount to survival.

Leadership and renewal have three critical components. Mindfulness, Hope, and Compassion, all equally important. At first glance, it may appear there is no time for this, as these three critical components may sound too soft to support the immediate hard work the organization faces. However, renewal starts with the leader. It starts with inward thinking and assessment of one's whole self, others and the context of our work environment and culture as it relates to offering mindfulness, hope and compassion. A leader who values these components shows up at work with:

Mindfulness- Involves being in a constant state of awareness of the total you, other people, and the environment in which work gets done. It is not only seeing the end product, but understanding the conditions and context in which the work gets done.

Hope- Involves inspiring and encouraging others. It is your vision that your people read, hear, and live. Inspire with kind words, and instill the belief that the goals can be met and achieved, even during periods of uncertainty and challenge.

Compassion- Involves you as a leader intentionally reaching out to understand the wants, needs, and motivations of yourself and those around you.

As leaders, while working through your seasons of change, consider these ideas for implementing and taking steps towards renewal:

- Be intentional in putting yourself in another's shoes-Being mindful and compassionate is said to spread positive energy
- Be more deliberate in giving employees decision-making responsibilities
- Focus on your own stress management and inner balance, then purposely seek ways to help others around you do the same
- Be active as a volunteer, coach, and mentor, both inside and outside the organization
- Spend intentional and planned time to connect with people in the organization, (NOT always to talk about work)
- Listen and hear the stories of others inside the organization-This will inspire you, and the employees in the organization

To learn more about leadership and renewal, Corporate University's Leadership Development Faculty recommends Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee's book: **Resonant Leadership: Renewing Yourself and Connecting with Others Through Mindfulness, Hope, and Compassion**, which can be accessed through Skillport on the CU webpage:

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MARCH 2011

Resilience

Just a few weeks ago "The King's Speech," a movie recounting King George VI's struggle with stammering, swept the Oscars for best picture, best director, best screenplay and best actor. King George was faced with life long adversity. While he never overcame his malady, he was able to become a very effective and beloved monarch. Through his public actions, such as keeping his family in London during a period of daily bombing, and occasional well crafted speeches, King George rallied the people of the British empire throughout World War II.

Our ability to effectively address the challenges that confront us, in both our personal and professional lives, is largely related to our level of resilience. More than just coping, where we employ techniques to lessen the impact of adversity, resilience is the measure of our ability to effectively turn challenge into triumph.

Surprisingly, our level of resilience often varies depending on the situation. What may be a major disruption to some is often seen as a minor annoyance or even an opportunity to others. Imagine that your team has just missed an important deadline on a major project. How will you react? Is this a disaster or an opportunity? How would your colleagues handle a similar situation?

In his book **The Resiliency Advantage**, Al Siebert, Ph.D., suggests that before reacting to "a major unexpected difficulty," we should start by identifying the important questions that must be answered such as:

- What is happening or not happening?
- How serious is the situation?
- How much time do I have before I have to notify others, make a decision, or take action?
- What is my level of involvement and who else needs to be involved?
- How are others (stakeholders) reacting to the situation?
- What are they doing or not doing in response?

Siebert says you can increase your resiliency by quickly ascertaining the full scope of the situation. Once you have the facts, you should explore the situation. Ask yourself what is good about this situation. Does it present an unforeseen opportunity? How can I turn this around so everyone will benefit?

Adversity as opportunity is not a new concept. While our coping skills will enable us to deal with the fallout of the missed deadline, it is our resiliency that will enable us to transform our deadline lemon into lemonade. Perhaps the missed deadline is an opportunity to review how work is assigned, realign skill sets within the team, create new partnerships with other teams, or launch a training program.

Does our response to the shortcoming focus an inordinate amount of time on reproaching the responsible individual(s), or cause us to develop new policies and procedures to ensure this type of incident never happens again? Is this the best use of our energy? A resilient solution doesn't just fix the problem; it creates a better outcome that benefits everyone.

In the culminating scene of the movie, following King George's famous brink of war radio address, his speech therapist notes that although the King did very well he still stumbled over a word. George responds that the slip ensured that his people knew it was really him giving the speech. Rather than feeling down because he didn't perform perfectly, George saw the slip as his opportunity to connect on a personal level with his people.

The **Resiliency Advantage** is available online free of charge through Corporate University's SkillPort link on the CU website:

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FEBRUARY 2011

Influence

Over the past few weeks, the events in Egypt have shown the power social networks have had in influencing people to take action. Citizens from all walks of life reached out through Facebook, Twitter and other social media to engage and empower themselves and their countrymen to act in a peaceful call for change.

Influence is a powerful leadership tool; dictators' influence with fear, politicians influence with leverage, coaches' influence with motivation, and advertisers through the art of persuasion. As a leader how do you exercise your influence?

While it is possible to have some measure of success by influencing others through positional authority alone, to be truly effective a leader must engage his or her constituents, colleagues and supervisors on a more personal level. Influence begins and is sustained by engaging and motivating others around a purpose. What the emerging lessons of the Egyptian revolution demonstrate is that anyone who knows their audience well and has a compelling purpose can have influence.

In a study commissioned by the Federal Reserve Bank, MIT Economist Dan Ariely and his colleagues discovered that workers whose assignments require conceptual and creative thinking are not particularly motivated by authority or rewards. Instead they found the amount of autonomy individuals have in their work assignments, the ability to master or get better at what they do, and the extent they feel that they are a part of a compelling purpose all increase productivity and leads to discovery of new and better ways of accomplishing the job.

The leader who clearly articulates and gains buy-in for the purpose, provides employees a certain level of autonomy and supports opportunities for growth is likely to have more influence with his/her employees while enjoying an increase in performance. Similarly, the leader who can articulate his/her purpose and demonstrate how it complements or enhances the purpose of a colleague or supervisor is likely to gain influence both within and outside of the division or office.

Reflection: In the days ahead ask yourself:

- How do I influence those around me?
- Have I clearly articulated the purpose to those I lead? (not just the nature of the assignment, but the result you envision)
- Do my employees truly embrace the purpose as their own?
- Have I taken time to understand how my colleagues and supervisor envision their purpose?
- Does my purpose complement or enhance the purpose of my colleagues and my supervisor?

While the final outcome of the Egyptian revolution is uncertain, the power of people rallied around a common purpose of influencing change is clear.

To learn more about Ariely's findings, Corporate University's leadership development faculty recommend Daniel Pink's book Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us.

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JANUARY 2011

"What our newest employees would like to tell us."

Whenever I need to be reminded that organizations are not boxes to be moved around but people who make up a dynamic "system" within the organization, I re-read Margaret Wheatley's book Leadership and the New Science. Margaret reminds us that organizations which are high performing are most adept at information flow. Having in place a process through which the right information finds its way to the right people, in a fluid, timely and consistent manner.

The College of Leadership Development is in a unique position to facilitate valuable information flow on the topic of leadership effectiveness, as we hear from multiple constituents throughout the organization on their point of view on this subject. In 2010 for example, over three hundred of our newest employees participated in the "Leadership 101: Introduction to FDIC Leadership" course and shared with us their point of view on the "characteristics of an effective leader."

What they had to say is certainly food for thought as we return from the holidays and re-engage in our leadership roles in a "New Year."

Be a good listener:

Monitor how much time you spend listening vs. "telling." Often in a fast paced "urgent" workplace setting we tend to move towards a "push" style of communicating and don't take enough time to pause and provide opportunities for others to share what is on their mind or their points of view.

Be flexible:

Another risk factor in high-paced work environments is a focus on "execution" driven by performance demands which may result in rigid and inflexible approaches to getting the work done and making decisions. As you start the new year take time to ask your staff what flexibilities might have been lost during the "surge" and what we need to do to restore flexibility.

Be open-minded:

Even in situations where the decision is yours to make, gathering input from people most affected by the decision contributes to creating an environment of engagement. Be clear that the decision is yours to make and that you would like their input as you consider options.

Be motivational:

When was the last time you felt inspired at work? How do you think your staff feels when they look to you for inspiration? Even the most self-motivated, high performing employee benefits from an "intrinsically motivating" climate that you can contribute to by creating a connection with your employees and sharing what keeps you going each day.

Keep your ego under control:

I have lost count of how many times during my tenure at the Department of State I heard Secretary Colin Powell remind everyone to "leave their egos at the door." How does your ego show up at work? Does it get in the way? Our ego shows up when we are driven by a need to win, a need to be right, a need to be considered the smartest person in the room or try to avoid accepting responsibility for mistakes or blunders.

Be a visionary:

No matter how busy our day-to-day demands are, our staff is looking to us to help them to see the direction we are headed in, how we are going to get there and why it matters. Your vision should include an element of what is important to them.

Have integrity:

All of us believe that we fulfill our leadership role with the greatest of integrity. Have you asked your team what it means to be a team known for its integrity? Their input may help you to more fully understand how to demonstrate integrity in your role as their leader.

Plan ahead/be organized:

Depending on our personality styles, some of us approach planning and organizing our work with a structure that is easy for others to step into or with a system that only we understand. When it comes to delegating work to others, a well defined plan and organized sequence of steps avoids confusion and ambiguity. If this is not your strongpoint, find someone on your team who can pick up responsibility for putting in place fundamental planning and organizational tools. The ability to know our gaps and to use compensating strategies is a sign of effective leadership.

Be competent:

Chances are that you gained your leadership position based on your technical competencies. Developing leadership competencies differs greatly from technical, tactical and operational competencies. Target one to two leadership skills to pay attention to this year and be proactive in learning something new and applying it in your day to day leadership role.

Be on time:

Whose time do you value? Do you tend to arrive late for employee meetings because you expect them to understand the demands on you? Do you need to pay more attention to respecting the time of your employees?

Be able to delegate:

One easy way to assess how well you delegate is to draw a "decision/action diagram" for each of your employees. How many decisions/actions do they have complete authority for, how many do they need to check in with you first before taking action, how many do they take action on and simply keep you informed? Examine these diagrams and ask yourself if there are areas where you can delegate more.

Maintain balance:

We have reflected in other Leadership in Action postings that we need to pay attention to making a conscious shift from a "surge" mentality to a "steady state" mentality. How many of us have found ourselves reflecting on the toll the last few years have taken on us and our teams?

The sprint we have found ourselves in for the last three years is not sustainable and the people who have the answer to the toll it has taken is your team. Ask them how we can restore our balance as a team. What do we need to stop doing and what do we need to start doing. What you may not be aware of is how the tactic of keeping up with an excessive workload by never really disconnecting from work has become a "habit" that we need to break by being intentional on moving out of crisis mode into long-term effectiveness mode. You can be a powerful force for re-establishing a work/life balance which will position us for long-term effectiveness and continued productivity.

Happy New Year!

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