

CEO DIALOGUES

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MEMO

DATE: April 30, 2010
TO: CEO Dialogues Participants – (Phoenix – April 8, 2010)
FROM: John Pearson
RE: Notes from the CEO Dialogues Roundtable

Thank you for joining us at the CEO Dialogues Roundtable, hosted by Food for the Hungry and sponsored by Grand Canyon University, www.gcu.edu. (Thanks, Scott!) Here are the notes taken by Bob Kelly, our Resident Wordsmith and QuoteMeister! These notes will also be posted online at: http://www.ceodialogues.org/pages/CEO_Resources

Selected Summary of Comments and Insights From CEO Participants

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Following a round of self-introductions, each of the 14 participants was asked to select three of the 32 possible discussion topics for the day, as listed in their notebooks. The results were then tabulated and combined.

The three most frequently chosen topics (in order) were:

- Recruiting and hiring the next generation (#9)
- Maximizing your impact with an effective executive assistant (#27)
- Major donor strategies and trends (#16)

Recruiting and hiring the next generation

The consensus was that very few leaders are doing so, or even thinking about it, except perhaps for possible candidates for next in line.

Most evangelical leaders are gray-haired white males.

We're failing to obey the command to raise up the next generation of leaders.

We need new ways of looking at the issue:

- developing a culture of mentoring younger generations;
- identifying and qualifying them, getting them in the room;
- building a bridge between bright young people and existing leaders;
- have younger staff members alongside the leader (at meetings, when traveling, etc.);
- develop intern programs and have younger aides;
- don't limit yourself to people within your own organization (perhaps pick someone from your church to shadow you);
- form focus groups, and listen to the feedback (can be more open and effective than in one-on-one situations)
- develop informal friendly relationships with others, touching their lives just by being there.

Maximizing your impact with an effective executive assistant

It's important to clearly define the EA role.

Emphasize that it isn't necessarily meant to anoint the leader's successor.

Walk before you run:

- Let candidates know your expectations;
- Start out on a trial basis (a week to a month);
- It's more effective than the usual three-interview process;
- Spell out what you want and why;
- Set the bar high;
- Resourcefulness is key competency – give candidates a problem to solve;
- Ask what candidate would do in your unexpected absence;
- Give EA authority to hire part-time, short-term temps;
- Have EA network with other EAs.

Key interview question: "What did a great day look like for you?"

Other observations:

- In general, women are better at multi-tasking in that role;
- In general, mature individuals are better suited than younger ones;
- When inheriting an EA, make your expectations clear; establish 60-90 day trial period and then reassess.

Major donor strategies and trends

Three primary areas:

- 1) Trends and problems;
- 2) Biblical principles
- 3) Solutions

Trends and problems

- Giving more to fewer groups and programs;
- Too much focus on events and group activities, rather than one-on-ones;
- Donations go further in overseas/global programs;
- Greater research/investigation on organization's website;
- Too much emphasis on percent of donations for administrative expenses, without considering the impact of the remaining funds (can be misleading);
- Recession is having a negative impact, especially on smaller ministries;
- Major (six-figure) donors like to associate with peers (a *We* mentality);
- Moving from transactional to transformational giving (engagement).

Biblical principles

In Acts 20:35, Luke quotes the words of the Lord Jesus: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

- Give people the opportunity to be blessed by their giving;
- Encourage the right attitude: God owns it all;
- Be donor-centric, rather than ministry centric;
- Share the vision, share the need and ask for support;
- Giving brings blessing for our generation, and for future generations as well.

Solutions

- Sharing results;
- Asking for input and solutions.

Developing the Seven Essential Axioms for CEOs

Axiom defined: “weighty wisdom in bite-size chunks”

Axiom 1: Discussion leader Bruce McNicol cited a book titled: *If I Knew Then What I Know Now: CEOs and Other Smart Executives Share Wisdom They Wish They'd Been Told 25 Years Ago* (Richard Edler, 1995), and challenged the group to do a similar book.

Axiom 2: Don't accept “virtuous mediocrity.” (Scott Fehrenbacher)

Axiom 3: High predictability equals low communication impact; low predictability equals high communication impact. (Ben Homan)

Axiom 4: Business will trend toward its most effective means and toward giving customers exactly and only what they want. (Mark Kuyper)

Axiom 5: Never walk, or lead, alone. (Ron Lush, citing Acts 13)

Axiom 6: Use the ministry to develop people, not people to develop the ministry. (Don Parrott)

Axiom 7: Before you teach them excellence, teach them to hide nothing. (Bruce McNicol)

On that last point, Bruce commented: “People are defined by what they hide. The future leadership generation is searching for authenticity from us.”

The other participants were also asked to suggest axioms. They included:

A bad idea with a good team will go much further than a good idea with a bad team. (Pat McCalla)

Spiritual authority is the most important leadership trait. (Pat McCalla)

Make your direct reports successful and you'll score “off the charts.” (Bob Andringa)

Building trust through modeling character and competency is your greatest challenge. (Bob Andringa)

Always ask God first. Spend 20 minutes daily with the Lord. (Mitch Hescox)

Life Balance/Time Management

Following lunch, the focus turned to two overlapping issues which had been selected: Living a balanced life (#5) and Time management tips (#8). Comments and suggestions included the following:

- There's never enough time. We can't do it all, so we must focus on what we do well and on what God wants us to do.
- Divide the day into five time modules: 7-10 am/10 am-noon/noon-3 pm/3-5 pm/5-9 pm. That's 35 modules per week. Mark them on your calendar; include some for family/personal time and other priorities. Have some non-negotiable time slots.
- Ask yourself what happens if it doesn't get done. The answer is often: nothing!
- How we manage our time impacts our team. Modeling is more important than what we say.

Leaders are readers

The participants recommended numerous books. Heading the list were two books by Ruth Haley Barton: *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry*; and *Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God's Transforming Presence*. (A complete list of her books is available on her website: www.thetransformingcenter.org.)

Other recommendations included:

- *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*, David Allen
- *Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams and Why People Follow*, by Tom Rath and Barry Conchie
- *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith*, by Richard J. Foster
- *Bo's Café: A Novel*, by John Lynch, Bill Thrall and Bruce McNicol
- *The Daily Drucker: 366 Days of Insight and Motivation for Getting the Right Things Done*

Note: The binders given to each participant included a list of 168 books reviewed and recommended by John Pearson. (Those reviews are archived at www.urgentink.typepad.com.) To subscribe to John's eNews, Your Weekly Staff Meeting, sign up at www.ManagementBuckets.com, or email John@JohnPearsonAssociates.com.

Finding time to read

Suggestions included:

- Read just the first sentence of each paragraph;
- Read the table of contents and/or notes in the back of a book;
- Have spouse, team members and others read books for you and summarize them;
- Listen to books;
- Use travel time to read or listen;
- Turn off TV;
- Use electronic tools (iPhone, etc.);
- Have small group (3-4) read a book a month and discuss.

Sloughing Off Yesterday

One of Peter Drucker's observations was that "It's harder to stop doing things than start them." Participants discussed the importance of not falling into the old "But we've always done it this way" trap, but rather heed the age-old wisdom of the Dakota Indians: "When the horse is dead, dismount!"

Writer's note: at times, some organizations become infected with "The Dead Horse Syndrome," which manifests itself in various ways, including:

- *Buying a stronger whip.*
- *Changing riders.*
- *Threatening the horse with termination.*
- *Appointing a committee to study the horse.*
- *Arranging to visit other sites to see how they ride dead horses.*
- *Lowering the standards so dead horses can be included.*
- *Reclassifying the dead horse as "living-impaired."*
- *Changing the form to read: "This horse is not dead."*
- *Hiring outside contractors to ride the dead horse.*
- *Harnessing several dead horses together for increased speed.*
- *Providing additional funding to increase the horse's performance.*
- *Doing a time management study to see if lighter riders would improve productivity.*
- *Declaring a dead horse has lower overhead and therefore performs better.*
- *Promoting the dead horse to a supervisory position.*

For the full list, visit:

<http://www.ministryplanet.net/sites/buckets/1> **The Results Bucket**

John Pearson described the process used by his friend and mentor George Duff during his years as president of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce. Once each year, behind closed doors, he would ask all his VPs to hypothetically trim their own budgets and staffs by 20 percent. As John noted: “It was just a drill—a confidential one—but it helped reveal the winners and the losers.”

One participant called the process “selective abandonment.” Another mentioned a pertinent question Andy Stanley raises in this area: “Where in the organization are we having manufactured energy?”

Bob Andringa suggested having staff members visit with their peers at other ministries and report back on whatever ideas, systems and procedures they find which may be more efficient and cost effective.

The Leader’s Edge

Steve Moore described a program his organization produces called “The Leader’s Edge,” a monthly summary of three books, plus an interview with one of the three authors. The program is downloadable in an MP3 audio format. Steve offered to send each participant the 2009 archives, comprising 36 book reviews and a dozen interviews. His offer was gratefully accepted. (Note: See the attached PDF in the email and click on the link.)

How the Internet Is Changing Ministry

When participants were asked if they had someone on their team studying the future of the Internet, most answered affirmatively.

Among the comments and suggestions were the following:

- It’s important to know if the people you wish to reach are readers or listeners, and to structure your communication methods accordingly. For example, conference calls work well for listeners.
- The Internet is still in the developmental stage, and changing constantly. Many wholeheartedly embrace it, while others continue to resist it.
- One challenge is getting older constituencies to embrace technology.
- Our responsibility is to use the Internet in God-honoring ways.

- It isn't necessary to do it all at once. "Both and" may be a better approach than "either or." Making effective use of various social media can help ease the transition.

Various participants described some of the technology tools they're using, including:

- Monthly video blogs
- Converting from printed magazines to ezines
- Using tech-savvy high school students to create brief video updates to send to constituents periodically.
- Video conferencing in real time
- Podcasting
- Interactive website development
- Board reports in digital format, uploaded to the website and password protected.
- Replacing printed board reports by giving each board member a jump drive containing all pertinent data.

As resources to help enhance the board communication process, two websites were recommended:

- www.boardsource.org
- www.boardeffect.com

A Final Word

One participant described the day as an example of the power of sharing. "The dividends from today are just beginning. Their value will continue to grow as the days pass."

The April 8, 2010 CEO Dialogues Roundtable was facilitated by Bob Andringa and John Pearson. For more information on CEO Dialogues, Inc., and future dialogues, visit www.CEODialogues.org.

Our thanks to Bob Kelly for his note-taking and insight in distilling an entire day of "CEO Talk" into bite-sized wisdom!

To subscribe to Bob's monthly eNewsletter, *The KellyGram*, "Wisdom and Wit About the Wonderful and Often Wacky World of Words," email him at: bob@kellygram.com or visit www.WordCrafters.info.