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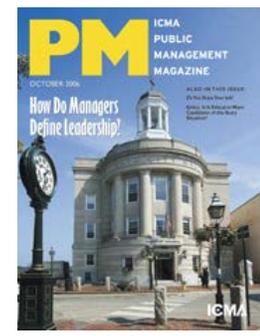
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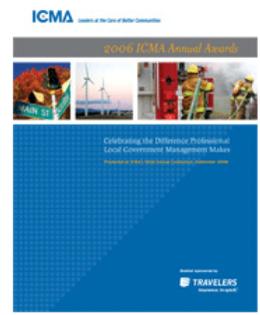
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I Know It When I See It: How Local Government Managers See Leadership Differently

by **Matthew Fairholm**

If you want to understand what leadership really is, why not ask local government managers? They practice leadership every day. And a recent research project did just that. Local government managers were asked: "What is leadership?"¹

The managers' answers were thoughtful but inconsistent. One manager, for example, said, "Leadership depends on who is in charge of the organization, operation, or project."

But another manager said something quite different: "Leadership is developmental in nature, helping guide others to the next level of work and as a person. Therefore, interpersonal skills are imperative. You need to know yourself and help others know who they are. When you get the inward issues taken care of, then you can handle the outward issues. I ask my staff to look in the mirror and ask the questions: Who am I? Where am I? Am I the person I think I am?"

The differences between the views of these two managers are stark indeed. In the research, I have surveyed and interviewed hundreds of local government managers in the states of Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Virginia, as well as in Washington, D.C., and saw great differences in how managers personally viewed management and leadership.

From interviews and written materials gathered during the questioning, researchers learned:

- People describe leadership from five different perspectives.
- Knowing that different perspectives of leadership exist can help public managers learn how to measure leadership success for themselves and for others.
- Understanding the diversity of perspectives can help public managers perceive how other people may view their leadership.
- The manager's perspective and the public's perspective don't always match.

When you think you are managing successfully, others may have different points of view that grow out of how they see and describe leadership success. Because managers' descriptions of leadership might not agree with the public's descriptions, reviewing some findings can help local managers get a better handle on the "leadership thing."

YOU KNOW LEADERSHIP WHEN YOU SEE IT

The five perspectives that emerged from our research tell us a lot about both modern management and leadership ideas as well as about the way people interact in organizations. On a management-leadership continuum, managers interviewed during our study identified five behaviors used by local government managers:

- **Scientific Management.** Emphasis is on managers understanding the one best way to promote and maintain productivity among staff; managers rely on the authority of their position to accomplish this. Someone in charge makes plans and tells others what to do. "Leadership is how you are able to get an individual or group to attain goals that you set forth."
- **Excellence Management.** Focus is on systematic quality improvements with emphasis on people involved in the processes, the processes themselves, and the quality of products that are produced. "Because of leaders, some organizations are progressive and come up with, and allow for, new products and services. Leaders are enabled to redefine the workplace to make it more comfortable, productive, people focused, employee friendly, customer friendly, and diverse."
- **Values Leadership.** Relationship between leader and follower that allows for typical organizational tasks to be

accomplished primarily through shared, prioritized values, not merely direction and control. Leadership success depends more on values and shared vision than on organizational authority. It is at this point that management and leadership begin to look quite different. "Leaders aren't always at the top. Wherever you are, you are a leader . . . if you are a leader. You have to be what you want your followers to be. [You] need to demonstrate and model behavior. There will be values differences, but you bring them together through core mission and shared values."

- **Trust Leadership.** Interaction between the leader and the led on the basis of trust founded on shared values; allows for the sharing of leadership among many people at different times. "Leadership is a fluid thing with leadership flowing back and forth in the group. Leaders are followers and vice versa. Leaders need to trust others and have faith in them. That is a challenge. But they need to try to focus on followers' strengths. People will rise to the occasion if they trust you. Leaders must role-model trust, integrity, and ethics every day."
- **Whole-Soul Leadership.** Integration of the components of work and personal life into a system that helps people grow and improve themselves; fosters self-leadership so that leaders see others as whole people with a variety of emotions, skills, knowledge, and abilities that go beyond the narrow confines of the job. "At a certain point the skills, tools, and techniques are not enough. What you need is to comfort, assist, and be concerned about others and love them."

Many people insist management and leadership are the same, but others are adamant that they are different. Local government managers who participated in our research showed us that successful managers can manage successfully whether they believe management and leadership are the same or different. But managers who believe management and leadership go together use tools, behaviors, and approaches different from those who believe that management and leadership are separate.

Our personal perspectives shape how we internalize observations and externalize belief sets. Therefore, our perspectives determine how we measure success in ourselves and in others. Our personal truths about leadership are defined by these perspectives even though those truths may not conform to an objective standard.

Managers we talked with agreed with the idea that different people see leadership differently—a significant finding because so much effort is expended in training and developing leaders in the public service.

One mid-level manager said, "A common denominator is that in my life my leaders have given me a chance to lead. They compel me to work harder based on getting to my sense of wanting to achieve, wanting more. They allow me to lead, therefore they become stronger leaders." Another manager said, "Leadership is about actualizing other leaders."

THE LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES MODEL

The model in Figure 1 explains leadership in terms of encompassing perspectives. The smallest concentric triangle in the figure is Scientific Management, and the largest is Whole-Soul Leadership. The sides of the triangles—leadership in action descriptions, tools and behaviors, and approaches to followers—provide information that helps us differentiate among various perspectives of leadership. Perspectives placed toward the outside of the nested triangles can encompass and transcend the perspectives placed toward the center.

Values Leadership, for example, encompasses the ideas of Scientific Management and Excellence Management but also transcends them in ways that help us to see distinct activities and approaches that create a line between management theories of the past and leadership ideas in contemporary literature. Perspectives that are placed farther to the outside in Figure 1 depict the continuum of leadership as it encompasses and transcends management.

In Figure 1, we see that Whole-Soul Leadership, although not necessarily better than other perspectives (except to those who adhere to it), is the most encompassing and transcendent perspective of leadership and interaction. Management—the two most central triangles—can still be seen as leadership (and many do see it that way), but that view is more narrow.

Further findings suggested some interesting trends.

- Male and female managers reflected all five perspectives, although females tended slightly more toward Excellence Management and males tended slightly more toward Scientific Management.
- African American and Caucasian public managers expressed all perspectives with the same frequency; thus Figure 1 applies regardless of the gender or race of the respondent—manager.
- The functional area in which the government manager works may influence that manager's perspective on leadership. Managers in public safety and justice lean toward the two management categories and the first leadership category: Scientific Management, Excellence Management, and Values Leadership. Managers in support, direction, and finance functions vouched for all but Trust Leadership, possibly because staff in these functions often check budget requests, verify work output, and audit performance; their jobs are to verify. Managers in human services and education, economic regulation, and public works reflected all five beliefs about leadership, but they leaned more toward management than toward leadership. In public works, a slightly higher number of managers reflected elements of Whole-Soul Leadership.
- The higher in the organizational hierarchy public managers were, and the more time in service they had, the more likely they were to subscribe to higher-order perspectives, that is, the categories toward the outside of the triangle. Individuals can move from the centered management perspectives to the more encompassing leadership perspectives by increasing their awareness of leadership activities, or their levels of responsibility, or both. Awareness does not depend on job promotion; a sense of leadership can grow whether careers remain at one level in the organization or careers span multiple levels.

One mid-level manager whose actions reflected Whole-Soul Leadership stated bluntly: "My views have changed over a number of years." A senior executive within Trust Culture Leadership said, "If you were to ask me five years ago, I would have a different answer; I'd have different thoughts."

It's possible that in the past these managers thought they were engaging in leadership, but they were actually managing instead.

Perhaps many managers have felt frustrations similar to those of one public administrator who recalled, "In this current job, I jumped right into management [because] there was a lot wrong in that area, and I was frustrated that I hadn't taken the time to do the leadership. Now I am starting from scratch all over, focusing on the 'leadership piece' because the office still did not function well."

CONCLUSION

What good is it to know that people perceive leadership in at least five distinct ways?

You will realize that your measurement of leadership success may not be identical with others' measurement of success, be they staff, peers, elected officials, or citizens.

Although a person's view of leadership might not be objectively true or reflect the most encompassing perspective, that person believes it is true and will act upon it. Disagreement on what makes a leader can be a cause of organizational frustration.

A manager may be working hard in terms of a personal measurement of success, but a peer or an employee may view that work effort and question its value or relevance. Such comparisons of efforts, output, and measures of success can cause frustration, which often results in lower productivity, lower quality of work, and morale problems.

Understanding your personal point of view and the points of view of others can help to overcome personal and organizational self-deception and resolve organizational dilemmas, not only for changes in policy and procedure but also for leadership activities.

Public managers can grow in their understanding of leadership activities in three ways:

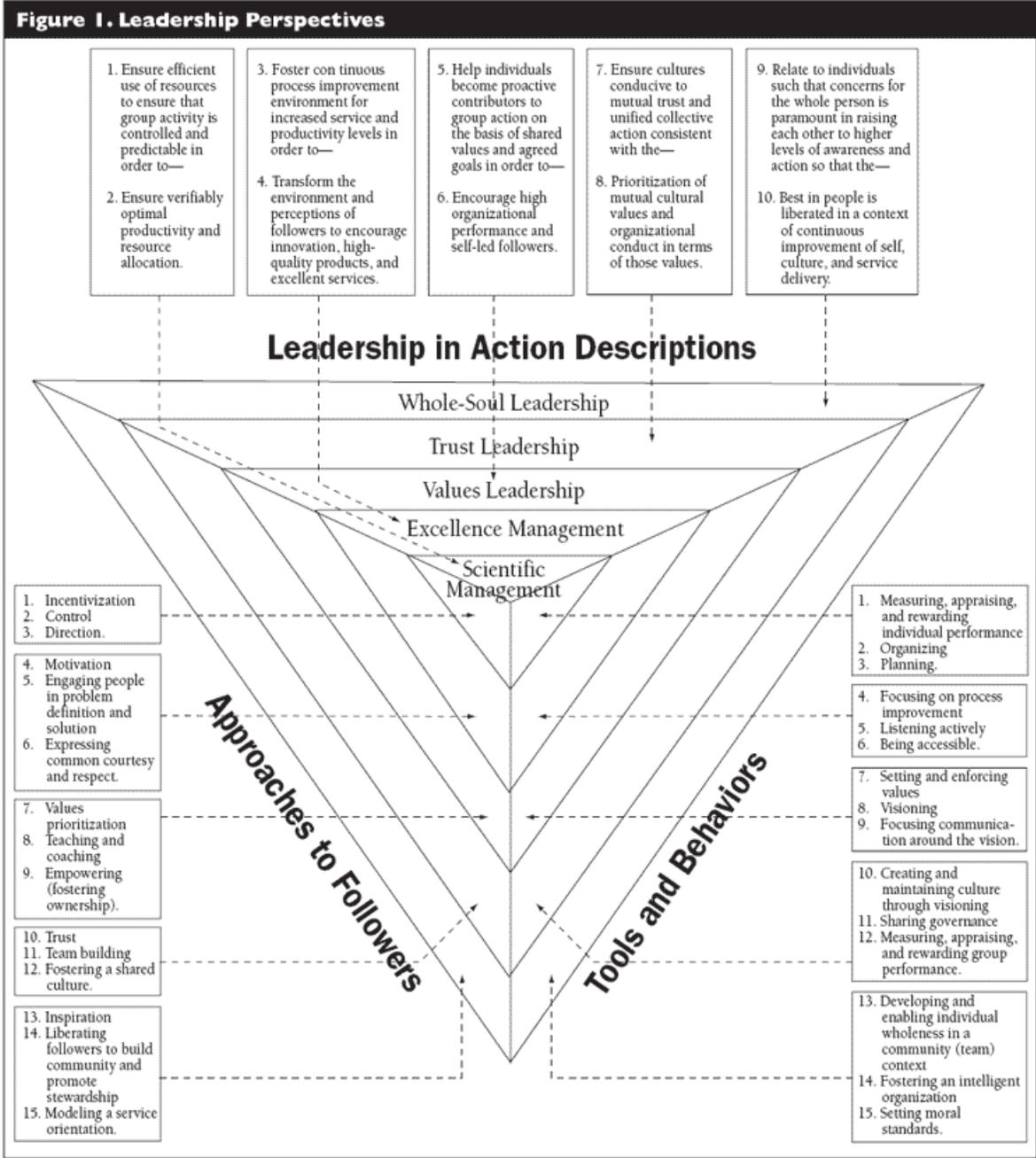
- Recognize that management functions and leadership functions are different. Managers working themselves up through an organization's hierarchy might be more aware of the differences, but the realization can occur at any level and may actually help managers prioritize their activities within organizations. One manager said, "I . . . am trying to think it through. Leadership is different from managing people. Relating to people in a way that they follow you through a mutual embrace of values, ideals, goals . . . that is leadership. In the end, a leader must have followers." Another manager said, "The goal is to lead . . . to lead as opposed to manage. People want to have someone to look up to and to follow. Leaders have to stand for something. You stand for something or you don't."
- Realize that leadership is more personal than some organizations (or people) are willing to admit. One manager said, "You must understand who the people are—their skill sets, the knowledge they bring. Leadership has a personal component to it. . . . It is hard to do. Early in this job, I didn't do that and I found myself in a rough place. Understanding values and skill sets—that is the beginning of the relationship." Another manager saw things this way: "You need to relate to [staff] personally. People need to know their leader. The leader has to be really visible. You need to know them, talk to them. We are not in an ivory tower giving commands. You should be out and about and lead by example and participation."
- Different perspectives of leadership may help us overcome personal and organizational self-deception. Discerning which perspective you hold and then recognizing that other valid perspectives exist allow us to see our work as public managers more clearly and more honestly.

The leadership perspective model shows the way to understanding the phenomenon of leadership and also to teaching and developing the leadership activities of individuals. The model in Figure 1 reflects the value of public managers helping other public managers do their jobs better as they share their ideas and their perspectives about leadership.

HOW TO GET STARTED THINKING ABOUT LEADERSHIP

Consider these tips:

- Clarify to yourself what equals success in leadership, and let others know what you think.
- Know what values your view promotes; for example, productivity, compliance, cooperation, community, participation, respect for others, justice, and fairness.
- Ask colleagues what they think equals success and discern which values those views promote.
- Recognize that your work entails both management and leadership and that the two may not be the same.



¹ *Conceiving Leadership: Exploring Five Perspectives of Leadership by Investigating the Conceptions and Experiences of Selected Metropolitan Washington Area Municipal Managers.* Matthew R. Fairholm, Ph.D. Sponsored in part by The George Washington University Center for Excellence in Public Leadership. A summary version of the study is published under the title "Different Perspectives on the Practice of Leadership" in *Public Administration Review* 2004, volume 64, issue 5, pp. 577-590.

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PM MAGAZINE

FEATURE

Keeping the Passion Alive: Some Lessons from My Personal Journey

by Frank Benest

This is a different kind of PM article. It is about my personal journey to regain passion in my life's work. I now want to share with you what I have been learning.

As I approach the latter part of my local government management career, I-like some of you-often find myself fighting the been-there-done-that blues. I know that I am in a good career, but in my honest moments I have worried that I have lost the passion for my work that once fueled me.

Consequently, I was ready for a call last year from Felicia Logan, director of the ICMA University, who told me with great certainty, "Frank, do I have a session for you!" When I quickly responded that I didn't want to lead another session at the ICMA conference, she insisted that I hold my objections until I heard the topic. "OK," I said, "What is it?" Stupid mistake. "Keeping the Passion Alive," she replied. Of course, I was hooked. Knowing that I teach best what I most need to learn, I agreed to lead the session at the conference in Minneapolis.

In thinking about how to rekindle the joy of my work, I concluded that there is no one right approach or set of strategies. So I am going to share some personal views with the goal of provoking you to reflect on how you feel about your work and how you too can act to keep or regenerate passion.

FRANK'S STORY

Because personal stories are often the most powerful way to share personal truths and learn from each other, I'd like to briefly share my story.

I just received my ICMA Service Award for 35 years in the profession. Throughout my career, I have always taken great pride in my life's work, my profession, and my passion for local government.

Almost six years ago, I was appointed city manager of Palo Alto, California. After several years on the job in Palo Alto, I felt somewhat stymied in my quest to make a difference, which I defined as external improvements in the community (new community centers, redevelopment projects, parks, and affordable housing). Palo Altans love their community and oftentimes want to keep it just the way it is. I also became increasingly distressed with the media abuse of local government, citizen distrust of public officials, and the process orientation of a university town.

Then, all of a sudden, I was overwhelmed with two personal crises. First, my two children (Noah, 10, and Leila, 6) and I lost their mom and my wife, Pam, who died of complications of pneumonia. Several months later, I began treatment for a life-threatening cancer.

"Boldness has genius, power, and magic to it."
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

I beat the cancer. But in the process of undergoing debilitating treatment just after losing my life partner, I lost much of my joy and became disengaged at work. I have very much needed to figure out how to rekindle my passion at work and in life.

The reason I jumped at the opportunity to conduct the conference workshop is that I knew that I would be forced to reflect on my life situation, organize my thinking, and ultimately learn along with all my colleagues.

TWO PREMISES

My thinking about keeping the passion alive is based on two premises:

- 1. It is quite common for senior managers in local government to experience the been-there-done-that blues, become

overly focused on the negative aspects of our jobs, and feel the need to rekindle the passion that first attracted us to local government management.

2. We can learn from each other about effective strategies to keep our passion alive.

PASSIONATE PEOPLE

Before trying to develop some personal approaches to maintain or rekindle passion, I asked myself and participants at the ICMA conference session the question: "What are the traits of passionate people?" Participants put forward that passionate people are:

- Engaged (Thank God it's Monday!).
- Energized (and they energize others).
- Enthusiastic.
- Ardent (fire in the belly).
- Committed, dedicated, and unrelenting.
- Learners.
- Motivated.
- Positive (even in the face of adversity).
- Caring.
- Focused.
- Highly productive.
- Inspiring (and they share their passion).

Session participants were also asked two other questions:

- After a number of years in the local government profession, what has caused you to lose some passion in the job?
- How do you keep some measure of passion in your work life? (See the boxed copy on this page for some of their responses.)

FIVE STRATEGIES TO PRESERVE WORK VITALITY

In the aftermath of my personal crises, I spent many lonely times trying to figure out my future. With the encouragement, advice, and moral support of my family, friends, and colleagues, I struggled to find a path and began to take some steps.

Looking back, I can now discern several approaches that helped me on my journey that is still, in fact, unfolding. Here are five strategies that have helped me (and others) maintain work vitality or recapture it.

1. HAVE THE COURAGE TO REFLECT.

Reflection is a courageous act. We often do not take the time to reflect because we fear what we may discover.

Reflection entails asking some hard questions:

- What are the values that attracted me to the profession? Am I fulfilling those values?
- What gives me meaning externally in the community and internally in the organization? Meaning is the most powerful generator of passion.
- In what ruts do I find myself? What is lacking?
- Where do I truly add value?

Reflection can be difficult or distressing, or maybe it is not in our nature, or we want to avoid the conclusions.

Therefore, we must help ourselves reflect or even force ourselves to reflect. Here are some ways:

- Talk to your partner about your early dreams.
- Write a short column for your employee newsletter (or just for yourself) on "why I became a city or county manager." I wrote such an article for the newsletter of the Municipal Management Association of Northern California. It became a first in a series of such articles by managers. (The articles are posted on the Cal-ICMA Web site at www.cal-icma.org, under Coaching Corner.)
- Engage in other kinds of reflective writing (a personal journal or an article like this) or a legacy statement for those who come after.
- Invite a dear friend for a coffee or a beer and share what you find lacking in your current job situation.
- Read a book about the "spirit of work" or about "searching for your identity," and discuss it with a friend.
- Talk to a therapist (as I have) or a spiritual adviser about your hopes, fears, and dreams.
- Take a break or go on a trip or a retreat, but do it with the conscious aim of reflecting.
- Attend or teach a class that is likely to force some reflection about your practice.

Reflection may lead us to focus on where we truly add value (and where we don't!). We need to ask ourselves honestly what our unique gifts really are. We all have limited time and energy, and we must focus on where we can make a unique contribution. For me, my gift is not financial management or budget oversight. It is organizational

development. I am good at working with employees in creating a dream and helping us move toward it. And that brings me joy.

2. TAKE SOME RISKS WHEN MAKING CHANGES.

Asking and answering the hard questions will suggest some changes. You may decide that you desire to develop with others a dream for your community or organization, or get out of the operational details and focus on coaching, or initiate a bold project. Courageous leaders often select bold projects because, as the German philosopher and poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe knew, "Boldness has genius, power, and magic to it."

How can we feel more comfortable taking calculated risks?

First, we need to recognize that at this stage in our careers we have great freedom to take professional risks because we, as seasoned managers, usually enjoy large "bank accounts" of trust and credibility with our organization, the council, and the community.

Second, we need to confront whether the worst-case scenario-being fired-could happen. The looming talent shortage of executive leaders in local government indicates that even this worst fear, along with having trouble getting another manager job, is not likely to occur. My mother, Rosy, used to ask, "What is really the worst that could happen?" and "Can you live with it?" If I could live with the worst, Rosy always told me to go for it.

I think that some of us need to acknowledge that we may have become less adventuresome in our thinking and doing than we were earlier in our careers. We must continue to put ourselves in new learning situations.

3. REIGNITE YOUR LUST FOR LIFE-LONG LEARNING.

Learning can often regenerate interest and passion in what we do. Taking on new roles is one way to foment new ways of experiencing work and life. In certain situations, for instance, I try to take on the role of follower (extremely difficult for me!) rather than leader. Following the lead of others, stepping aside, and supporting the initiatives of others all create new perceptions, new experiences, and new ways of experiencing the work group.

Of course, reading nongovernmental literature and making connections with your work is another way to gain new insights and excite yourself about new possibilities. Scheduling work meetings at locations outside the local government (at the materials recovery center, the biological nature preserve, the assisted living facility, for example) and getting a tour and a presentation of the work done there is a wonderful way to generate different thinking and make new connections. Many learn from traveling to different cultures or doing international work through ICMA or other organizations.

Such learning can help you integrate new disciplines and world views into your thinking and practice. I have a colleague who has studied Buddhism and has applied it to his leadership task. Buddhist thought, for example, suggests that to truly learn and lead, we professionals must forgo our "expert mind" (which is closed) and adopt a "beginner's mind" (which is open to new data and approaches).

"The ultimate freedom is the ability to choose our attitude regardless of the circumstances."

—Viktor Frankl

To stimulate creative thinking, we in Palo Alto start each executive team or department staff meeting with a "learning report" from a team member. The learning report is an article, a workshop, or an experience that will help keep our learning edge.

4. SHAKE THINGS UP!

Sometimes we must move beyond our tired mind-sets that can inhibit new action; we need to force new thinking about the possibilities of work and life.

Here are some ways of shaking things up:

- Set up a satellite office in another facility and work from there once a week.
- Visit street crews and surprise them with a tailgate pizza party once a month.
- Take vacation leave and build homes for Habitat for Humanity.
- Go on a week-long spiritual retreat.
- Do a management exchange through ICMA with a colleague working in Ireland, India, or Turkey.
- Go on an international study trip through ICMA or another agency.
- Participate on a peer assistance project organized by ICMA or another organization (for example, helping a Gulf Coast community severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina).
- Take a dance, art, or photography class or join a hiking group.
- Volunteer in a person-to-person capacity with a nonprofit organization.

Recently, I have been coaching young professionals and reaching out to cancer victims in the midst of treatment for my kind of cancer. These person-to-person experiences have been rewarding and also have shaken up my perspectives. I am able to feel good about my blessings and the gifts I have to offer others.

5. CREATE A "PASSION PROJECT."

Given your values, interests, and gifts, what would be a passion project for you? In Palo Alto, I have selected an affordable housing initiative as my passion project. Professionally, I have developed a statewide coaching program as my passionate endeavor.

What are some ways to make a passion project happen?

- Select a shorter-term passion project, to produce some results sooner rather than later and thus maintain your self-motivation, as well as a longer-term project.
- Develop and write down several goals, timelines, and milestones for your project, just like any other important work project.
- Protect time for your passion project by delegating some of the non-passion stuff. I no longer review staff reports for the city council agenda, or sit in on the first round of department budget hearings, or attend council committee meetings unless I lead a particular project. Of course, when you delegate non-passion work, you must become more tolerant of learning mistakes as others take on new responsibilities.
- Share your passion project with others so it becomes real. Talking to colleagues creates personal accountability and generates useful feedback to sharpen your focus and approach.
- Celebrate your passion! Host a pizza party or ice cream social once you complete your passion project.

SOME PARTING ADVICE

Recognizing that every journey is distinct, I'd like to share some parting advice for those of us who struggle with the issue of maintaining a sense of vitality as senior members of our profession.

First, not only might we become less adventuresome, but we might also tend to isolate ourselves from others. Therefore, a good way of exploring different paths is to reconnect with people. I have begun to schedule coffees or drinks with colleagues in my area to explore some of my doubts, concerns, and hopes for the future.

I have also scheduled informal coffees with each member of our executive team to discuss what is going on with me, what is going on with them, how I am going to re-engage, and where I can leverage my talents, given their needs. To reconnect with our 1,100 employees, I have conducted a series of "conversations with Frank." Opening ourselves up to others whom we respect or love and reconnecting on a personal level are critical first steps in our journey of renewal.

Second, as we have become embroiled in various local government issues, we may have lost some measure of our service ethic. When we give a lot, we eventually get a lot. Giving and getting is a great approach to our work and professional lives. For example, along with many of my colleagues in the profession, I give a lot to ICMA, and in the end, the service enriches me.

Third, as we approach the last part of our careers in local government management, we may wish to think of legacy. When we retire and walk away from local government, for what do we want to be remembered? In my organization, I want my legacy to be that our employees will take risks and not be afraid of advocating their professional judgment in a demanding environment.

In the greater profession, I would like my legacy to be "preparing the next generation of local government managers." A sense of legacy helps fuel passion.

Finally, it is all about choosing our attitude. It is our decision whether we want to remain in local government and how committed and engaged we want to be. As Viktor Frankl declared in his book Man's Search for Meaning, "The ultimate freedom is the ability to choose our attitude regardless of the circumstances."

We all face different circumstances in our work and our personal lives. I wish you well as you too strive to find joy in what you do and who you are. PM

Losing and Keeping the Passion
At the 2005 ICMA Annual Conference session, participants were asked to respond to this question: After a number of years in the local government management profession, what has caused you to lose some passion in the job? Session participants identified these factors:
Indifferent people No appreciation Poor councilmembers Frivolous, high-profile litigation Petty personal problems Long hours Attorneys and unions Micromanagement Failed initiatives Providing same information over and over Politics of one (The power of one councilmember) CAVE People (Citizens Against Virtually Everything) Absolute need to be perfect Repetition.
Participants also recounted some personal strategies when they finished the following sentence: I keep some measure of passion in my work life by...
Building a team Recognizing others Mentoring and coaching Connecting with younger managers Helping people Getting out of the office and talking to residents Networking Taking advantage of professional development Having a sense of humor Keeping work at work Finding personal time away from work Finding something outside of work to love Having a supportive family.

Frank Benest, Ph.D., ICMA-CM, is the city manager of Palo Alto, California. He dedicates this article to all his friends-old and new-who have helped him regain joy in work and life.

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OCTOBER 2006 · VOLUME 88 · NUMBER 9

FEATURE

Ethics

ETHICS INQUIRIES

IS IT ETHICAL TO WARN CANDIDATES OF THIS SCARY SITUATION?

Q. After the county administrator was forced to resign, the board of supervisors advertised her position for a lower salary than is paid to the department directors and to the administrative assistant, all of whom report to the county administrator.

Other county and city managers in the state are concerned about this situation and the fact that a strong movement is under way in this county to recall some of the elected officials. Should they put the facts out on the statewide discussion list and offer to answer questions? Or should they simply respond to calls from people who do their homework and contact them for advice?

A. Under these circumstances, it is appropriate for the state leadership to post a message on the statewide discussion list and to offer to answer questions about the compensation and the current environment in the county. In addition, it is appropriate to contact the county elected officials directly to offer advice on the pay and qualifications that will attract good candidates.

AVOIDING PITFALLS WITH VENDORS AND ADVISORY GROUPS

Q. The purchasing director is participating in a statewide advisory group of software users. The city is pleased that he is participating because the software is being updated and the user group may be able to influence changes that will improve efficiency.

The purchasing director has been asked to serve as the liaison between the user group and the vendor. The city is paying for all expenses for the purchasing director to participate in the user group. In addition, all of the local governments participating in the user group have agreed that the vendor may not use the names of government staff in any promotional materials. The city does not anticipate purchasing additional software from this vendor in the near future. Are there any additional ethical questions the city should address?

A. Local governments benefit when staff participate in user groups, advisory committees, and focus groups with businesses. When the professionals who use the software can contribute ideas on ways to improve it, the local governments will benefit by having a better product. The vendor also benefits from having good user feedback and may be able to expand its market share.

You have addressed the two primary ethical considerations:

1. Local government employees should avoid endorsing commercial products or creating the appearance that they are endorsing a particular product or vendor. It is appropriate for the purchasing director to serve as a reference for potential buyers and to answer questions about it. Writing articles for professional journals or speaking at state and national conferences is another way to share information on how a local government has used particular products or services.

2. Local governments are wise to pay travel costs for the purchasing director's participation in the advisory group because all of the benefits of the director's participation accrue to the county. This creates an arms-length relationship with the vendor as well, making it clear that there is no financial benefit to the employee's participation.

There are no immediate issues regarding recommendations from the purchasing director because the city has already purchased the software and has no plans for additional software purchases from the vendor in the near future. It would be inappropriate for a purchasing director to make a recommendation to purchase software if the purchasing director had been involved in helping that business develop the software.

For advice on the ICMA Code of Ethics, or to find out more on ethics training and technical assistance available to local governments, call the Ethics Center at ICMA at 202/962-3521, or visit the Web site at <http://icma.org/ethics>. Calls or e-mails can also be directed to ICMA's ethics advisers Martha Perego, 202/962-3668, mperego@icma.org, and Elizabeth Kellar, 202/962-3611, ekellar@icma.org.

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On Retirement

SENATE RESOLUTION ENCOURAGES SAVING FOR RETIREMENT

For a great majority of Americans, traditional pensions and Social Security remain the bedrock of retirement income. Those plans do help provide workers a safety net in retirement, but they aren't enough.

Experts estimate that workers may need more than two-thirds of their current income to maintain their current standard of living in retirement. Increased life expectancy, rising health care costs, and fewer employers offering full retirement health care protection are just a few reasons why it's imperative that public employees set aside additional money for the future. Yet statistics show that only between 30 to 40 percent of public employees are taking advantage of additional opportunities to save through their deferred compensation and defined contribution plans.

JOINT CAMPAIGN

That's why ICMA-RC stands at the forefront of National Save for Retirement Week, a joint public campaign effort of both ICMA-RC and the National Association of Government Defined Contribution Administrators (NAGDCA). The goal of the week is to make employees aware of the growing importance of their individual responsibility for retirement security. We as employers and providers need to spread the message among public sector workers that income in retirement will likely come from traditional pension plans, Social Security, and other savings vehicles.

National Save for Retirement Week, slated for October 22-28 this year, received a strong endorsement from Congress when Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR) and Sen. Kent Conrad (D-ND) introduced a resolution that calls for a nationwide focus on retirement saving and promotes the crucial role of employer-sponsored retirement plans.

ICMA-RC IN THE LEAD

ICMA-RC is taking a leadership role in this effort by spearheading a variety of promotional and educational initiatives that are intended to help public sector workers understand that their retirement security will ultimately be determined by their ability to save for the future.

To spread the word about this important issue, we are planning a briefing for local media. We've prepared extensive materials for plan sponsors, including ideas for activities to involve local government employees in Save for Retirement Week. We've also expanded our own offerings of educational materials to target the savings needs of different demographic groups such as young workers, mid-career savers, and women. We have also added content to our Web site (www.icmarc.org) to promote National Save for Retirement Week.

Our promotion of National Save for Retirement Week fully acknowledges the important role of defined benefit plans in the public sector. Over 90 percent of public employees are covered by defined benefit plans, which provide an excellent foundation for retirement security. However, even the strongest advocates for defined benefit plans agree that these plans alone do not provide for a secure retirement.

We want to overcome the apparent complacency among public sector workers and emphasize that only through individual saving in defined contribution plans and supplemental savings plans will they build retirement security.

Whether you are an employer or a provider, I encourage you to join us in this important effort to raise participation through your own promotional campaigns. National Save for Retirement Week should not be a one-week wonder; instead it should be the launching pad for a year-round effort to raise retirement plan participation among state and local workers.

—Joan McCallen
President and CEO
ICMA-RC

Washington, D.C.
www.icmarc.org

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DEPARTMENTS

Profile

City Manager Says, "West Jordan Is Becoming Nicer All the Time"

GARY LUEBBERS, WEST JORDAN, UTAH

What do NBA great John Stockton and West Jordan, Utah, City Manager Gary Luebbers have in common? More than you might suppose.

Both graduated from Gonzaga Prep High School in Spokane, Washington. Both were recruited to help troubled teams. And there's the Catholic-coming- to-a-predominantly-Mormon-area connection-although religion differences have been a non-issue for Luebbers. "Before moving to Utah, I was cautioned about the predominantly Mormon population," Luebbers said. "It's never once been an issue, and that's how it should be."

Utah wasn't even on the radar screen when Luebbers was looking at job options more than five years ago. Then, his recruiter found out about an opening in a suburb of Salt Lake City. "I had never heard of West Jordan," he said. "But I was experienced in the types of challenges West Jordan was facing."



Gary Luebbers is city manager of [West Jordan, Utah](#).

Luebbers was hired in a rare 7-to-0 city council decision. At the time, the council seldom had recorded a unanimous vote. He planned to stay in Utah for a couple of years to help city officials get a handle on the problems caused by unprecedented growth. He passed his five-year mark this past December, however, and has no plans to leave.

"Yes, Utah has beautiful mountains, and I can get to work in five minutes and to the airport in 20 minutes. But specifically, it's the people," he said. "I've run into the nicest people I've ever met here in Utah. I've had several good opportunities to leave, and we've declined every time because of the people we know and work for."

His wife, Jeannie, has also been pleasantly surprised. If she could transplant their four daughters and five grandchildren, she'd be perfectly content. "We really like Utah," she said. "It's hard to be away from the grandkids, but the overall quality of life here is really good." She travels to California every six weeks to work for a week and see some of their grandchildren-two of them live in Washington state.

She returns to Utah with a fresh appreciation for how little traffic, smog, and congestion she finds here. Of course, it's all relative. Traffic is the city's biggest problem, Luebbers said. The city has been hard-pressed to keep up with the infrastructure demands generated by double-digit growth.

When Luebbers took the helm in December 2000, West Jordan had recently annexed two parcels from unincorporated Salt Lake County and increased its population by 10,378 overnight, to 78,714. At the end of 2005, the population was 96,052. It's expected to pass the 100,000 mark this year.

During the past five years, the city has built three new fire stations (all paid for), and a 48,000-square-foot justice center. A state third-district courthouse was built behind the justice center, and KraftMaid Cabinetry is building a \$106 million facility in West Jordan, in one of the biggest deals in the region. Both the college and hospital are also expanding. "Good things are happening everywhere you look," Luebbers said. "It's been great fun to see what's happened in West Jordan. And it's not over."

Luebbers is not without his critics, however. When you make decisions, you can't make everybody happy all of the time, he said. "The biggest criticism I hear is 'You're in charge,'" Luebbers said. "You're right. That's what I'm paid to do."

A city manager and a city council are supposed to work together in a collaborative effort. You can't get anything accomplished when you're constantly banging heads, he said. "It doesn't mean one or the other rolls over and plays dead," Luebbers said. "We work together. We all bring something to the table—the council, the staff, and the citizens."

The city council sets the policy, but the city manager runs the city. "Although there is always something else that needs attention, the city has never been run better or more effectively than it has in the past six years," Councilmember Rob Bennett said.

Luebbers tries to run the city as a business. But when you insert politics into it, it makes it a different ballgame, he said. It's different from running a business in the private sector. For example, the CEO of an automotive group and his employees share the same goal: sell more cars, make more money.

Luebbers has seven bosses—the mayor and city councilmembers. "One wants to go north. One wants to go south. One wants more multifamily. One wants more one-acre lots. And in 18 months, we'll have an election, and the vision can change."

Luebbers said he is flexible to the situation and environment and adjusts his methods accordingly. "I tell the council, 'We can do anything you want; we just can't do everything you want. Prioritize, pick one.'"

He thinks the public grossly underestimates the council. "They're involved. They're engaged. They [councilmembers] care so much about what they do," he said.

The accomplishment of which he is most proud is the high-quality staff he has assembled. He picked his directors based on their experience with the issues West Jordan faces. "It's a legacy I can leave behind, and a legacy they'll continue to perpetuate."

City Attorney Roger Cutler joined Luebbers in 2003. In his 34 years at Salt Lake City, Cutler saw a lot of management styles. He said Luebbers is one of the best. "He's very knowledgeable about public finance and making the numbers work," Cutler said. "Gary also has superior people skills and knows how to motivate people."

Tom Burdett, the city's community development director, joined the staff in 2001. He said by far the biggest accomplishment the city has experienced during Luebber's tenure is the financial restructuring. "Gary excels at watching revenues and expenditures and matching up the right revenue sources with the proper expenditures," Burdett said. "There are all kinds of things that go into the equation, but economic development is key" because it increases the city's sales-tax base.

The property tax the city collects doesn't even fund the police department. "The business climate has changed considerably from one of a bedroom community of Salt Lake City to more of a full-service city with its own economic base," Burdett said.

Police Chief Ken McGuire noted that Luebbers sets high standards. "His expectations are even higher for himself," McGuire said. "He is the hardest worker I have ever worked with."

In 10 years, the only vacations he's taken have been to the hospital: once to donate a kidney to his daughter, and a February stay in the ICU for a bleeding ulcer. "Some people go to Hawaii, I go to the hospital," he joked.

As the highest-paid city manager in the state, he feels like the mayor and council have shown confidence in him and he "works hard to repay it." Before coming to Utah, Luebbers worked as a public administrator in California for 12 years. He also spent 21 years in the Air Force.

He served as an airman in Vietnam and worked his way up to director of contracting, where he was tasked with fixing problems at Air Force bases around the country. His military achievements earned him the "Contracting Officer of the Year" award in 1974. He keeps a picture at his office from the time when he was serving in Vietnam. When a day is particularly challenging, he pulls it out to remind himself that no matter how bad a day he has had, it's nothing compared with what he saw in Vietnam. "I survived that and earned about \$97 a month—but it was all-you-could-eat . . . out of a can."

Luebbers also coached high school basketball when his daughter Wendy played. She now coaches women's basketball at Eastern Washington State University. He enjoyed teaching the concept of teamwork and putting together winning strategies that still allowed for individual achievement and team pride. He applies those same principals to his job today.

During his tenure, the city has become a better place to live, Bennett said. You only have to drive around and see the road projects, clean streets and yards, public safety improvements, parks, shopping, and entertainment opportunities that are part of this thriving city.

"West Jordan is a nice place. It's becoming nicer all the time," Luebbers said.

—Kim Wells
Writer
West Jordan Journal
West Jordan, Utah

This article is reprinted with permission from the *West Jordan Journal*, West Jordan, Utah (May 2006).

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Performance Matters

Every day, HR professionals in the public sector face challenges in recruiting and retaining talent, transacting critical personnel actions, and promoting and supporting employee success, among other key activities. In many cases, however, these activities are conducted without access to appropriate and timely information. As a result, decisions may be more reactive and tactical than strategic. And HR's efficiency and effectiveness may suffer.

How can HR be more strategic? How can it achieve higher performance? We believe that regular performance measurement is the key. It provides the information necessary for HR to function as a proactive and strategic asset, rather than as a strained cost center. As governments face the significant challenges of an aging workforce and increased competition for talent from the private sector, performance measurement becomes a more important tool; HR must strive to become ever more relevant to an organization's operations.

It seems, however, that HR is often left out of government conversations on performance measurement. Why? Perhaps, it's because HR professionals often don't know what appropriate performance metrics are, let alone how to quantify them.

Many departments are already collecting and reporting data on what are often inaccurate or misleading indicators of success. Further, most HR measures focus too much on one area—such as controlling costs—to give an accurate overall picture of performance.

Effective performance measures in HR should take a snapshot of the overall health of human resources within the organization. HR can begin by asking these questions:

- How do we measure our success in HR?
- What information do we believe would help in making decisions?
- What information would help us to reach our goals or do our jobs better?
- How can we demonstrate our success to others?
- What are HR's greatest challenges?

It is these types of questions that get to the heart of what makes a performance measure meaningful: accurate, timely data that enable informed decision making and that demonstrate effort.

Measures should also align with HR's mission, especially as it relates to the present challenges. Recruiting efforts, for example, are a high priority, given the rising number of government employees eligible for retirement. Two specific performance measures, "time to fill" and "cost to hire," help in monitoring recruitment efforts.

"Time to fill" is the average number of days it takes to successfully fill a position, while "cost to hire" is the average cost of identifying a candidate and filling a position. While these measures afford a good overview, drilling down to break out specific groups of employees, like executives or administrative staff, reveals even greater detail.

Retaining talent is another important HR function and an area where monitoring performance can guide strategy. Monitoring the turnover rate, both voluntary and involuntary, over time enables HR to understand why good employees are leaving the organization or to determine whether a specific position is difficult to fill.

If recruitment is working well, hiring practices will match positions with people who have the appropriate skills and experience to complete the work. When employees do not "fit" their positions, they are more likely to leave the organization or even be terminated.

Turnover is also a good indicator of employee morale and should be used when assessing management. If a particular department is showing a high rate of turnover, this measure could point to problems with the work environment and with how the department is being managed.

Similar to turnover, absenteeism is another effective means of monitoring HR's performance in vetting candidates and

filling positions. High absenteeism can greatly hinder an organization's operations and cause a loss of efficiency when employees assume additional responsibilities because of unexpected absences.

Frequent absenteeism often signals a failure in matching a candidate's skills and experience with an appropriate position. It may also indicate low performance in conducting the necessary background checks and reviewing a candidate's work history.

Setting such performance targets as a maximum number of days in which an employee problem should be resolved is another strategy for measuring different functions. Once a specific target has been set, HR can monitor performance related to the target.

For customer service, an organization could track its ability to resolve complaints within a given time period. An organization, for example, would learn that 67 percent of HR complaints were solved within three business days. This strategy can also be applied to processes like orientation, training, and application administration.

Establishing effective HR performance measures may seem daunting, but it's important to remember that HR measures speak not only to HR's performance but also to the health of the entire organization. This point in itself may be the best reason to get HR back into the performance measurement conversation.

—Glenn Davidson

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FEATURE

Books

THE 8TH HABIT

BY STEPHEN R. COVEY. PUBLISHED BY THE FREE PRESS, NEW YORK, NEW YORK. 2004. \$26. HARDCOVER. 317 PAGES PLUS APPENDICES.

Leadership author Stephen R. Covey's *The 8th Habit* complements his famed bestseller *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. However, the eighth habit—finding your own voice and inspiring others to find theirs—doesn't exactly add another habit to the first seven. Rather, the eighth habit brings out the voice of the human spirit, which is the soul of organizations, families, and society.

Covey intertwines the "voice" and its unique personal significance with the original seven habits. The significance of our voices is revealed as we face our greatest challenges. Each person's voice is at the intersection of his/her talent, passion, conscience, and needs. Covey uses real-life examples and includes a DVD of 16 companion film clips to emphasize his teachings.

The author makes the case that effective use of one's voice will help overcome the pains of the workplace, the home, and communities. Finding one's passions and helping others to find theirs will lead to true fulfillment, relevance, significance, and contribution. Inspiring others to find their voices unleashes their latent human genius, creativity, passion, talent, and motivation. An inspired group of people who are using their own voices can achieve the next level of breakthroughs in their marketplace and in society.

Covey's teachings don't end with the theoretical. He notes that expressing one's voice must be done with vision, discipline, passion, and conscience. Trustworthiness is built by modeling character and competence, the keeping of promises, honesty, integrity, kindness, and courtesies. Covey recognizes that competing and conflicting voices need to be blended in to achieve third alternatives that realize a shared vision. Finding the sweet spot requires aligning goals and systems for results, releasing people's talent and passion, and focusing on the wildly important.

The 8th Habit is a must-read for everyone who's been enriched by the first seven habits. Be ready to get in touch with your real self and to find the path from effectiveness to greatness.

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