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## Leading Communities: Earn Allegiance with a New Model for Change

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John Darrington

Successful organizations are dynamic, not static, always looking for a better way of doing business. With a vision of what they want to become, they set goals that make the vision a reality. Their employees have a clear understanding of the mission and feel a driving commitment that sets the organization in motion.

Two key components go into leading a dynamic, visionary organization, in my opinion. First is the ability to transform a community's old paradigm (or archetype for itself) into a new, widely held and well-defined community vision. And second is the capacity to create a distinctive environment in which employees feel an alignment with and a deep commitment to the ideals and mission of the organization.

How can an organization that is stagnating in the safety and security of an old operating mode develop the desire to move into a brave new world?

I've been asked many times why I went to Rawlins, Wyoming, to be its first city manager. In fact, my wife's mother said to her upon viewing Rawlins for the first time, "Why did John bring you to this Godforsaken place?" Oldtimers from the area used to say, "Rawlins isn't the end of the earth, but you can see it from here!"

What drew us to this wind-swept, dust-blown community of 12,000 people? It was a vision of what the community could become. A key group of people from the Gear Up for Growth Committee had begun shaping a new paradigm, or model, for Rawlins. This group was committed and dedicated to a new vision of the city. They had politically orchestrated a change in the form of government from strong mayor to council-manager by a slim margin of 21 votes.

They wanted the yellowish hue filtered out of their drinking water. They wanted to

eliminate the annual infestation of freshwater shrimp, which traveled through their 75-year-old, wood-stave transmission line. They wanted parks, playgrounds, and a community recreation center. But most of all, they wanted to change the image of Rawlins from that of a community that had squandered much of its municipal wealth to one of a locality respected by its sister cities for its wise use of taxpayer dollars, its efficient services, and its technology-savvy staff. They wanted to instill a new pride in every aspect of city government. In 1981, Rawlins was clearly a fresh canvas to work on.

## Where to Start

Where does a leader begin when confronted with a challenge like this? How do you bring a community together to generate a shared vision with common goals? One of the first things I did was to convene the councilmembers to discuss their visions and major goals for the community. This meeting had the makings of a contentious affair. Remember, the form of government passed by only 21 votes, so there was no consensus about the community's future direction.

Not only was Rawlins geographically divided by the Union Pacific Railroad mainline, but it was also racially divided. Two councilmembers represented the south side of the community, which had one-third of the population but a majority of the community infrastructure needs, including leaky water mains, collapsing sewer lines, a city park that had returned to its native condition, dilapidated housing, and no fire station.

During the first goal-setting session, I asked the councilmembers to set aside the fact that they had been elected from different parts of the city and focus on the greater community needs, and the meeting went amazingly well. The council agreed on an overall vision for the community. And the south side of Rawlins garnered the majority of number-one priorities on the city council's list of goals.

Significant changes occurred because of the goals and new vision. Within four years, six parks and playgrounds were either constructed or reconstructed, a new fire station was built on the south side, housing rehabilitation grants were secured, and the city accounting and utility billing system became fully automated.

The greatest achievement for the council, however, was its newfound ability to articulate with one voice and enunciate a single vision to the five top elected officials of the state. Conveying one clearly defined vision got impressive results and helped the city secure grants from the state's substantial infrastructure account to address critical city needs.

The ability to speak with a unified voice and to make significant progress in a community starts with a leader or group of leaders who analyze the past as they contemplate the future.

Each year, when the freshwater shrimp infested the water system, the city became the subject of unfavorable news articles across the country. The council used this negative media coverage to convince the state that it needed assistance to build a water filtration plant. And it worked! A water treatment plant was built to eliminate the yellowish-colored water and the freshwater shrimp. The state granted half the capital construction money, and within seven to eight years, the state of Wyoming had also funded 60 percent of the replacement costs for the 75-year-old, 26-mile wood-stave pipeline. That was progress!

# How Does Progress Start?

The ability to speak with a unified voice and to make significant progress in a community starts with a leader or group of leaders who analyze the past as they contemplate the future. They consider the history and traditions; unique physical characteristics, nature, and driving force of the economy; and the core community values. They capture in words their dreams and ambitions for a renewed community, bearing in mind what it is they want to bequeath to the next generation.

A wise city manager discovers early on the community's vision for the future and, if it has not been developed fully, orchestrates the process to bring it about. It's the manager's job to help elected officials to understand that a community is more than a series of connecting streets that share a common water and sewer system, dotted by an occasional park or playground. Instead, it is a dynamic laboratory where paradigms are changed, where diverse individual dreams, ambitions, and economic interests are intertwined into a community fabric called a "vision."

An excellent leader will not only help break down old paradigms and instill vision but also find a way to earn the respect and win the hearts and souls of the people who work in a public organization. Public employees don't have the same tools as a private company has to motivate people. A public employee cannot earn an equity interest in the company or receive shares or dividends, six-figure bonuses, or trips to exotic places. The public's business is conducted under a unique set of rules and ethical considerations.

The key to developing an extraordinary environment in which employees have a deep-seated commitment to the ideals and mission found in some organizations is summarized in the words of Mark Willes, former chair and CEO of the Times Mirror Company: "People will work for money, but they will die for something they believe in deeply. They will give their all for a cause to which they are committed. If a leader is to lead, he or she must kindle the passion of the organization, give energy rather than take it away, and help people feel purpose."[\[1\]](#)

There is a connection between the visioning and goal-setting process and helping employees become fully engaged participants in a public enterprise. Exceptional organizations have a shared vision, common goals, a clear sense of purpose, a mission statement, and guiding principles or values. The process of identifying shared values builds an effective bridge to the hearts and souls of the people with whom we work.

How can an organization that is stagnating in the safety and security of an old operating mode develop the desire to move into a brave new world? Henry Kissinger once said, "The task of the leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been. The public does not fully understand the world into which it is going. Leaders must invoke an alchemy of great vision."[\[2\]](#)

## On to the Present

Bringing about a new operating paradigm has never been more challenging than in my present setting. Richland, Washington, was built on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation during World War II to house people working on the super-secret Manhattan Project, the effort to build an atomic bomb. It was a government town in every respect. The government owned the houses, schools, stores, and utility systems.

Consequently, when Richland was incorporated in 1958, it inherited all the government-run systems and mentality. These systems all came with pages of rules, regulations, and detailed procedures on how things were to be done—the old operating paradigm.

In August 2001, after six months on the job, I wrote a memo to the council describing what I thought needed to take place in Richland. It read: “As the Board of Directors of the Municipal Corporation, I invite you to participate with the staff and me in what I have called an ‘odyssey of discovery.’ It is a process by which we will discuss and agree upon the core governing principles or values that we would like to espouse as an organization.

“At present, our operating manuals and policies continue to thicken as more situations and conditions are confronted and a ‘rule’ or ‘regulation’ promulgated. We can’t do away with these operating manuals entirely, but certainly we can separate the minimally essential regulation from the rest. In a values-based environment, employees are empowered to make certain decisions within the framework of the agreed-upon core governing values of the organization. We want to unleash the energy in this organization that is bound up in rules.”

The process of identifying and agreeing upon the core values of Richland has been challenging. There were those who advocated and, in fact, helped to continue the old government model. They were deeply invested in the policy manuals and had a difficult time imagining an operating environment without a lot of structure and prescribed ways of accomplishing each task. They enjoyed the safety and security of the current system. Flexibility and innovation were regularly sacrificed on the altar of “one size fits all.”

A larger group sat on the fence. Some viewed this emphasis on values as a “flavor of the month,” like the total quality management (TQM) movement or the Richland logo, which reads, “Remarkable! Resilient! Resourceful! Ready!” These approaches to bringing about change were viewed by employees with cynicism and seen as without substance, depth, or commitment.

Why should Richland employees believe that shared values would be any different? I suggested that a values-oriented system would give greater flexibility to the employee in figuring out the answers to a question or issue posed by internal or external customers. The employee would have a set of agreed-upon values, along with supporting statements describing the general intent. Expected outcomes would be creativity, innovation, and empowerment of employees.

There would be less emphasis on “knowing all the rules” and more emphasis on “understanding our governing values” and acting responsibly, based upon them. We would still have policy manuals, but ideally they would diminish in importance (and weight?) over time. Tremendous power and energy are unleashed in a person who is authorized to act upon shared principles or values to get a job done!

Fortunately, we had a significant group of people who saw the wisdom of the new paradigm of shared values. They were identified early in the process and volunteered to be champions in helping the organization make the transition from a rules- to a values-oriented culture. From the values identification process, in which every employee participated, the governing board and employees agreed to fly under the flag of integrity, teamwork, and excellence. The values champions defined what each “value” meant and held training sessions on implementation.

These universally shared values make up the building blocks of our city organization. They have become the basic structure upon which employees are empowered to make decisions and resolve problems.

## Forever a Challenge

Moving to a new way of doing business will always be a challenge. Leaders must create an atmosphere in which new paradigms can develop and mature. Every day, people show up to work and go through the motions without being fully engaged in the mission of the enterprise. Most people, however, respond positively to change when they perceive that it will help them perform their work better. They want to work in an environment where their contribution is valued. They want to be associated with an organization that kindles their passion and is worthy of emulation.

Changing paradigms in any organization occurs most effectively when the workforce is thoroughly involved and committed to the ideals and mission of the enterprise. As employees are immersed in the process, they formulate a widely held vision, goals that support that vision, a clear sense of mission, and universally agreed-upon principles or values that guide the day-to-day operations of the enterprise. The processes of visioning and involving can help leaders change paradigms and earn employee allegiance—in turn, producing successful public organizations.

[1]Mark Willes, “Principles of Leadership,” Exchange (Marriott School at Brigham Young University, Annual Report Issue, 1995/96), p. 25.

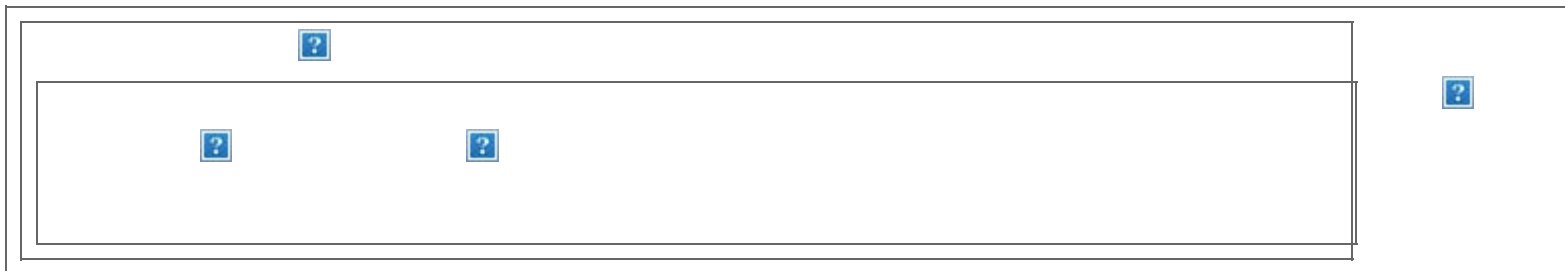
[2]Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America’s Best-Run Companies* (New York: Warner Books, 1982), p. 282.

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# Ethics Inquiries

## The Moonlighting Employee

ICMA members engaged in a lively exchange in the Association's online discussion group on local government management. The essence of the discussion and debate on employees who moonlight is captured in this column. Contributors' names or locations are not included here, except when they themselves granted ICMA the permission to use this information in the text.

The online discussion began with this scenario submitted by a participant:

An elected official has requested that one of our IT people do some computer work for this elected official's business, noting that he would pay the employee and that the work would be done after normal working hours and on the employee's own time. We also have dealt with a request from a department director, who asked if she could pay one of the maintenance workers to do some work at her home for pay.

1. Does your locality have any policies that address employees' moonlighting for elected officials or for department directors and other staff members?
2. What potential conflicts do you see arising from allowing employees to work on the side for elected officials, department directors, or other staff members?

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**City Manager**

Here is what contributors to the discussion had to say:

My approach is to think how this story would look if it appeared on the front page of the newspaper the next day. Would the public really think the employee was doing this on his own time and that no city time was spent on the project? It might be difficult to explain.

While our city does not have a written policy that prohibits it, when asked, I try and steer our employees away from such jobs.

---

**City Manager**



If your employees are like most, they appreciate the opportunity to earn some extra money. Should we keep them from earning extra income on their own time?

The question I would ask is whether or not this outside employment could make a difference in the employee's evaluation.

The best approach is to adopt a written policy before it becomes an issue.

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#### **Town Manager**

Our city government does not allow this type of activity.

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#### **City Manager**

Our city has had a few instances of this sort of outside employment, and we do not have any policy. While we have not had any problems so far, I have thought [that there is a] potential for a public perception problem. It is sad when we have to restrict people's rights, not because of actual wrongdoing but because of possible misconceptions and misperceptions.

When elected and appointed officials and employees choose to work for government at any level, they recognize that they must give up some of the rights they have chosen to defend and protect by working for government. Sometimes, government feels compelled to develop policies to restrict officials and employees in their personal lives, limiting their opportunities to hire particular individuals or to work for particular individuals. This sort of restriction can make public employees and officials feel like second-class citizens.

Because of these complexities, it's important to take care in adopting new policies, as they may needlessly take away the rights of our employees.

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#### **City Manager**

Our city requires full-time employees to seek management approval before working at another position during outside hours. Exceptions to this are jobs that would be considered to be nonrecurring, such as giving a lecture at a college.

This being said, as long as it isn't detrimental to the employee's performance here, I generally support an employee's request for outside employment. In small towns, it can be difficult for employees/ councilmembers to maintain an arm's-length relationship in every aspect of their lives. At the same time, I prefer that employees not work for individual councilmembers. If they do, it is in their best interest to keep impeccable records of hours worked and dollars paid.

Personally, it would have been convenient for me to hire employees for several jobs at my home, work that could have been done with my own tools (and for market pay). I have not offered these opportunities to town employees, however, so that I avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

---

#### **Town Manager**

Our city government has a general policy related to work outside of city employment. The guideline considers city employment primary and all other employment secondary. It includes certain prohibitions against conflicts of interest but leaves plenty of room for interpretation. The policy requires employees to register and disclose their outside employment each year, usually with their annual evaluation. This discipline helps the city screen for any abuse and can avoid

potential conflict situations.

We advise employees not to do outside work for managers or city council, as there could be an appearance of a conflict of interest that could become a legal conflict of interest. Even the most honest of arrangements [may not] appear that way to others. There can be allegations of improper use of city funds or equipment, employee favoritism, or retaliation.

For example, the city could face a charge of theft of city property and funds, as well as discrimination and unlawful distribution of employee leave time, when a supervisor has had his subordinates "helping with a fence and landscape project at his home." Legal issues that could arise include employment discrimination charges, theft, health stress claims, wrongful termination, reinstatements, and valid termination. It can take years to clean up a problem in a department afterwards and for management and employees to regain a respectful relationship.

It is not a good idea to adopt a policy at the same time as you are dealing with an immediate request. If the employee is an exempt manager or has a direct report to you, you should discourage the employee from working for the councilmember by explaining your concerns about the appearance of or the potential conflict of interest.

Assuming that this approach is successful, then you can help the employee extricate himself or herself from the deal with the councilmember. It is tricky but necessary. Sometimes, legal counsel can be helpful in talking with the employee. Be clear about your position before you start confronting people.

If the employee is nonexempt, a good strategy is to work on a policy to permit outside employment but to establish some parameters for the approval. Outside employment is a sensitive area. Employees have certain protections in their pursuit of outside employment, even by their primary employer, so long as it is not affecting their primary employment in a direct and adverse or unlawful way.

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### City Manager

In Oregon, the laws regulating ethics for public officials are set at the state level (city policies can be more strict). There are several ways in which this situation could violate Oregon state law and city policy.

First, state law and city policy require that no city resources be used in any outside employment. Thus, the computer technician/parks maintenance workers could not use any tools or vehicles for any outside employment, regardless of who was hiring them. But under Oregon law, there are additional potential violations for the councilmember, the department head, and the employee performing the work.

State law and city policy prohibit using public office for personal financial gain (or avoiding financial detriment). If the computer technician gave the councilmember a discount over what they have ordinarily charged (if they have worked for others outside the city government), the councilmember would be in violation. Theoretically, if the technician charged the councilmember a rate lower than other businesses performing the same service, the councilmember could also be in violation.

The technician could potentially violate city policy and state law by providing these services if they do not have an established outside business. They would fail the "but for" test. The technician would not have been asked to work on the councilmember's computer "but for" his or her employment at the city (a violation of the personal financial gain provision).

It's possible that one of the reasons the councilmember and department head want to hire city staff for these services is that they are paying less than they would for a similar service from a private sector competitor. This would suggest that the councilmember or department head might profit from their public position in violation of Oregon's law.

The employment may be acceptable if the employees have existing businesses and if the councilmember and department head have procured their services through an advertisement or some means outside the city government and paid the same fee as any ordinary citizen. But then the question would be: Why not just hire the competing business and avoid any

appearance of impropriety?

---

### City Manager

In our business, perception is reality. The relevant policy of the city of Sterling, Kansas (population 2,642), follows:

#### Section 4. Outside Employment

No employee of the City of Sterling shall be permitted to engage in any outside employment, where such employment conflicts or interferes with the performance of City duties.

No employee shall conduct, or in any way engage in, another occupation or field of endeavor while on duty with the City.

The employee should inform the outside employer that the City job comes first when scheduling conflicts occur, including overtime and callbacks.

#### Section 6. Favors, Gifts, Gratuities, Rewards

No employee shall seek, receive, or give any gratuity (in the form of compensation, entertainment, trips, gifts, favors, or otherwise) of "significant value" from or to those who have or seek business dealings with or receive service from the City of Sterling.

It is expressly prohibited for any employee, in any way, to use their position or influence for private gain for themselves or others.

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### Brian Silcot, City Manager, Sterling, Kansas

Willard, Ohio's policies read somewhat like Sterling, Kansas' policies:

#### Incompatible Employment.

(a) No full-time employee of the City may engage in any occupation or outside work that is incompatible with his employment with the City. If any employee engages in work similar to his City employment on off-duty hours, no City equipment shall be utilized.

(b) Any employee of the City engaging in outside work for compensation shall inform the Personnel Director, in writing, of this work, its nature, and the time consumed in or on such work. The Director shall decide whether or not such outside work is incompatible with City employment and shall regulate the number of such hours for this outside work. Failure to comply with this section shall leave the employee open to disciplinary action.

#### Gratuities.

No employee of the City shall accept any gratuity, gift, or other valuable thing for his personal use from any other person or corporation when such a gift is given with the expectation or understanding that the employee will attempt to secure for such person or corporation, at the hands of the City, better or more favorable treatment.

As I serve also as the personnel director, I look closely at any request for outside employment. If there is even a hint of potential incompatibility, I deny the request. Working for a councilmember or someone who is directly above them in the chain of command, or one of those persons' immediate family members, is a definite no-no.

I can appreciate wanting to give public employees the opportunity to make some extra money for their families. But every job brings with it certain conditions of employment, and this has to be one of those conditions for public employment.

In a perfect world, we wouldn't worry about appearances or what potential outcomes may be, but this isn't such a place. As public servants, we all must go beyond what the private citizen does in order to maintain our assertions that public programs are provided fairly, honestly, and without being compromised. The value of that integrity is incalculable and next to impossible to regain once lost.

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**Brian Humphress, City Manager, Willard, Ohio**

*Editor's note: ICMA's management discussion group is open to ICMA members working in local government. For more information about joining ICMA, visit ICMA's Web site, [icma.org](http://icma.org). At the site, members can click on "Interest Groups and Discussion Lists" and then on "Listserves" for information on signing up for the discussion list.*

Ethics advice is a popular service provided to ICMA members. The inquiries and advice are reviewed by the Committee on Professional Conduct, the ethics committee of the ICMA Executive Board. Some of the inquiries are revised and published as a regular feature in *PM*, to give guidance to members in the big and little ethical decisions they make daily. If you have a question about your obligations under the ICMA Code of Ethics, call Elizabeth Kellar at 202/962-3611, e-mail, [ekellar@icma.org](mailto:ekellar@icma.org) or Martha Perego at 202/962-3668, e-mail, [mperego@icma.org](mailto:mperego@icma.org).

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## Corporate Profile: Accenture Working with Local Governments to Achieve High Performance Levels

Accenture, a management and technology services organization, collaborates with local governments to develop high-performance solutions that both exceed the expectations of the businesses and citizens they serve and help governments operate more efficiently.



Government organizations are facing challenges on an unprecedented scale, mainly in the form of rising citizen expectations coupled with budget deficits. Accenture is a partner with the experience and vision to assist local governments in achieving both short- and long-term performance goals.

### A unique partner, extraordinary results

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services, and outsourcing company. Committed to delivering innovation, Accenture collaborates with its clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. With deep industry and business process expertise, broad global resources, and a proven track record, Accenture can mobilize the right people, skills, and technologies to help clients improve performance.

In the United States, Accenture employs more than 25,000 people and has offices in 27 cities. We have teamed with governments at all levels to implement practical, efficient solutions that help governments perform more efficiently and effectively.

Accenture offers local governments key services in the following areas:

- Enterprise Resource Planning
- eProcurement
- Revenue Collections Case Management
- Strategic Sourcing

- Shared Services
- Business Process Outsourcing
- Health and Human Services
- Accenture eDemocracy Services
- 311

Accenture has teamed with a number of government agencies to help them on their journey to high performance. Our work with New York City, as described below, is just one example of our experience and the results we've helped deliver.

## New York City 311

More than 900 non-emergency city services in 170 languages for 8 million residents-services that once filled 14 pages in the New York City phone directory-are now available 24/7 by placing a single call to 311. Working closely with the city's Department of Information Technology and Telecommunication, Accenture and New York City produced the nation's largest 311 project, introducing not just new applications and technologies, but a new way of doing business. Having surpassed the two-million-call milestone in just five months, the New York City is ensured the agility required for high-performance government.

In addition to working with New York City, Accenture has also worked with the City of Boston, the County of Alameda, California, and the County of Miami-Dade, Florida.

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# Profile

## Village Managers Are Good Friends, Neighbors



Jim Norris (left) is village manager of [Hoffman Estates](#), Illinois, and Ken Fritz is village manager of [Schaumburg, Illinois](#).

As Village Managers Ken Fritz of Schaumburg [Illinois] and Jim Norris of Hoffman Estates [Illinois] chat, working their way through an early breakfast at a local eatery, an observer almost immediately would notice a special tone in their voices. There is a certain give-and-take in the way they talk, with one often finishing the other’s sentences.

One will let his voice trail off, looking for the right word or thought to finish his point, only to have the other insert the exact idea the first man was searching for, an act that is met without hostility or aggressiveness.

Other times, as one begins to examine a point, the other will lean back, listening intently until the thought is finished, at which point he will rejoin the discussion to add his argument. An observer might conclude that the pair are old friends, having honed their discussion pattern over years of debates, friendly arguments, and similar experiences.

And he'd be right: they have been friends for more than 20 years. "We actually met the first day of classes in the [public administration master's program at Northern Illinois University] in the late summer, early fall of '81," Norris said.

Each had decided that his life wasn't coming together the way he would have liked and that he needed to make some changes. In the beginning, Norris was working in American Airlines' lost-luggage department in St. Louis. After President Ronald Reagan deregulated the airlines, Norris began to hear warnings about mass layoffs and that he would be part of the cutbacks.

Though Norris had taken the LSAT, he didn't want to attend law school, plus he saw that a career with the airline wasn't viable. He needed to find a career path that suited him, and fast.

His father suggested that he explore city management. Norris had taken some political science classes as an undergraduate at the University of Missouri at St. Louis and was familiar with what was involved in running a community. "Enough to know it was something I might want to do," he said with a laugh.

Using one of the few remaining perks of his employment at American, Norris flew to Illinois on an employee pass and met with the director of the public administration master's program at NIU in DeKalb. During the meeting, the director showed Norris a map of the United States, covered with pins. Each pin was where one of the school's graduates worked, the director said. To Norris those pins meant jobs, and jobs meant a future. He was in.

Fritz's journey to the public administration program wasn't much different, albeit a shorter trip. He had completed his undergraduate degree at NIU in political science and was trying to figure out his next step.

In the meantime, he needed to make a living, so he worked at different Radio Shack stores, leading to an opportunity to close a store in DeKalb. As he did that, he continued thinking about what he wanted to do next.

Again, it was a family member who set the course: his sister told him he should look into continuing his education at NIU in the public administration program. The fit was perfect. And the stage was set for Fritz and Norris to meet.

"Jim was always more outgoing, I think, than I, in terms of being more comfortable in public," said Fritz, 46, remembering what they were like when they first met to create a study group with other students. "I think Ken has always been more analytical and technically sure," said Norris, 45.

## Intertwined Lives

Their lives intertwined almost immediately and continue to do so. As part of the NIU program, they were required to do internships in city government offices. Norris worked in Western Springs; Fritz went to Lisle.

Once both had finished in the top 1 percent of the class of '83, they headed off to their first jobs: Fritz, who always had a head for numbers, was hired as Glencoe's assistant director of finance, Norris as Palatine's assistant village manager. That was where things started to get a little weird.

In 1984, Fritz was hired as assistant director of finance in Schaumburg. Two years later, his college friend joined him when Norris was hired as the assistant village manager. In 1988, on the day before he got married, Norris received a phone call from Gladstone, Missouri. Congratulations, the voice on the other end said. You're our new city manager. Be here in 30 days.

Norris promised his wife, Irene, who was raised in Palatine, that they would move back to the area eventually, but he was excited about the new experience. He and his bride settled into their lives in Missouri.

Back in Schaumburg, 1989 brought the hiring of a new assistant village manager, and Fritz was selected. In 1998, he was promoted to the top administrative position, beginning his tenure as village manager. But he wasn't the only village manager hired that year. Neighboring Hoffman Estates had just announced its top administrator.

You guessed it: Norris was returning from Missouri to take the position. "I don't think either of us imagined it," Norris said with a hearty laugh. The coincidence of their friendship and the connection



between two of the most prominent communities in the northwest suburbs is not lost on the two men.

## Healthy Rivalry

Like the villages they help run, they carry on a rivalry that started years before, during softball games and golf outings, a competitive spirit that has helped them grow in their personal and professional lives, they said.

“We’re extremely competitive,” Norris said. “I think that’s one of the reasons we like each other so much.” In college, they competed in grades and sports. Now they compete, in a friendly way, over the triumphs of their children.

As they wait for their breakfast orders to arrive, they comfortably slip into a conversation about Norris’s son’s latest sports success. (He’s done really well in baseball.)

Norris and Fritz have shared the highs and lows of each other’s lives, from the births and raising of children to work problems and professional advice. Both said that among their fondest memories are their weddings, acting as groomsmen for each other.

“Ken and I probably go to breakfast or lunch, mostly lunch, four or five times a year, just to catch up on things,” Norris said. “Not so much with work—work will invariably come up—but really more for ‘What’s going on with your kids?’” (Norris has three: Jimmy, 13, Shannon, 9, and Jennifer, 22 months. Fritz and his wife Karen also have three: Tanya, 18, Derek, 16, and Cohn, 8.)

Norris and Fritz don’t always agree, nor do their boards. “For Jim and me, it’s kind of weird because on one hand we’re friends, and on the other hand we have to have some positions where we’re a little guarded,” Fritz said.

The times when Hoffman Estates and Schaumburg are at odds may be few, but they happen. When they do, the respect and friendship that Norris and Fritz have fostered help buffer the situation. “I would never go to Ken and put him in a position that compromises his professionalism on the job,” Norris said. “So if I’m given a position or I know Ken is given a position by his board, we’ll respect that. We won’t push it.”

## Still Evolving

Fritz and Norris acknowledge that they are much different than they were when they started that study group in 1981. Laughing, they say it’s more than the hair they’ve lost or the weight they’ve gained. It’s the way they’ve grown as people and as leaders. “I think we’ve kind of come together over the years,” Fritz said.

The Schaumburg manager said he had to expand past his analytical mind and learn to delegate. Norris, on the other hand, used to avoid anything financially related, but he learned those skills as part of his job. “It’s just an evolution of our skill sets,” Norris said. “We’ve evolved, and aged,” Fritz said, as the two men laugh together and fall back into the pattern of conversation formed by years of friendship.

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