IMPROVE YOUR LEADERSHIP SKILLS BY THINKING UP

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Why Vertical Development Matters

Patrick Malone, WASHINGTON, D.C.

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A ny CEO, whether leading a private or public organization, knows that success can depend on first establishing a solid relationship with the governing body. The relationship, individually and collectively, must be built on a foundation of mutual trust and respect for the other’s unique role and responsibilities. Local government managers face the added challenge of doing this publicly, despite competing interests and the pesky requirements of democracy.

When either party fails to understand its role or strays across boundaries, intentionally or not, the relationship can be strained or fractured. An elected official acting like a manager can create an ethical dilemma for the manager as well. Here are two real-world incidents that highlight ethical issues that can arise.

Incident #1
The takeaway from the new city manager’s first council retreat was that public works was a real weakness in the organization. The manager promised to pay close attention to the situation and, after a year, concluded that the public works director lacked the technical and management skills needed to lead the department.

A significant amount of coaching and direction didn’t seem to yield better results. The manager terminated the public works director and then informed the mayor and council. The following year, the wife of the now former employee ran for and won a spot on city council.

The new councilmember is highly critical of the manager’s performance and prefers to address her concerns and complaints only in public forums. She also goes directly to staff to inquire about project status, get information, and issue requests for service. The manager met with the councilmember in an effort to get her to deal directly with him and identify the source of her discontent. Nothing has worked.

The manager next learned from a vendor that the councilmember called the vendor to determine why a project was not progressing on time and to demand better results. The manager believed her action was improper. He wonders what his next step should be. Should the manager address this issue with the councilmember? Go to the mayor?
GOVERNING BODY MEMBERS MUST POLICE THE CONDUCT OF THEIR PEERS AND WEIGH IN WHEN IT CROSSES BOUNDARIES.

Many times elected officials are motivated by pure desire to serve the voters, and they wander into the manager’s “territory” because they lack an understanding of the manager’s role and how to get things done. Managers can help newly elected officials understand the division of labor between elected officials and staff. Council retreats, orientations, presentations by corporation counsel, and regular discussions are all effective ways to build a strong understanding of roles and responsibilities and establish the ground rules for conduct of all parties. A low-key, one-on-one approach often is successful in resolving missteps and issues.

But the manager can’t be expected to correct inappropriate upstream conduct. Governing body members must police the conduct of their peers and weigh in when it crosses boundaries. In this case, the manager should explain to the councilmember that her intervention is neither helpful for the project nor appropriate. The manager should also inform the mayor and request that the councilmember’s conduct be addressed by her peers.

Incident #2

What do you do when the mayor is the offending party? One city manager faced that issue after the departure of the director of the city’s performing arts center. The mayor then presented the manager with an ultimatum: rehire the director or meet with council in executive session called specifically to consider the manager’s continued employment.

The director had resigned from the city following a media report that he had accepted many gifts from individuals doing business with the city and failed to follow the disclosure laws. The director had been competent, but his conduct violated city policy and the law and embarrassed the organization.

This was a deal breaker for the manager because all staff, including the director, had been through ethics training that specifically addressed the gifts issue. The manager had offered the director the option to resign or be fired.

The manager informed the mayor that he would not reconsider his decision and was glad to discuss his rationale with the full council in executive session. From the manager’s perspective, this was not about power or territory but about preserving the city charter and rule of law. His ethical obligation is to resist encroachment on his professional responsibilities, to handle each personnel matter fairly and on the merits, and to do what is right—even at the cost of losing his position.

Governance coach Mike Conduff reminds both managers and elected officials of the importance of the team relationship: “It is hard to imagine an effective team environment where members don’t know or operate within their roles. Visualize an airline pilot leaving the cockpit to serve drinks or a pitcher abandoning the mound to catch a fly ball in the outfield.”

Elected officials are critical in their governing role, and in order to be effective must be educated, trained, and coached in that role. Managers can clearly assist with training, but mentoring and discipline rest largely with the mayor and governing body.” We skip training camp at our peril.

MARTHA PEREGO
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It all comes down to trust. A talented team of department managers makes or recommends infrastructure decisions. Having worked for only seven years in local government, the past two as city manager, I learned quickly that trusting the experts is the only way for a manager to be successful.

I still remember the first time I was acting city manager. The city manager had just boarded a plane when the police chief called me at midnight. I answered the phone and heard, “We’ve found a dead man in his backyard, and his body is frozen.”

The next thing the chief said was, “Just want you to have a heads up.” What the chief did not say was, “What should we do?” This was a critical first lesson for me, as it made me acutely aware that department managers know their jobs, are highly professional and incredibly capable, and that I can and should allow them to do their jobs.

In our small community (population 6,220), we have to implement these big-ticket items the right way, the first time. There are no “do overs”! So prioritization is key.

I start by reviewing our list of community needs and preferences. Then, I develop a game plan with staff to analyze the options.

Once the plan is in place, we interface with each of the stakeholders, including elected officials, civic and business leaders, and most importantly, the residents, to determine whether the proposed direction of the project mirrors what we initially projected. After a thorough vetting process, we proceed with developing an implementation plan.

Only by adhering to a comprehensive and robust approach can we best determine how to garner maximum value from these limited dollars. Across the board, this is the ultimate goal that prevails and drives us forward.

Investments in infrastructure happen more often in response to a problem instead of the planned comprehensive approach that most of us would like in our decision making.

Usually, I start with a needs-assessment study, strategic plan, or capital improvement plan. As the project is being developed, I seek stakeholders for input and support as priorities and funding are determined.

From experience, I have learned to be aware of the hidden costs and unintended consequences. Check investments carefully for training and operations costs along with annual maintenance contracts to ensure the best long-term decision for your community.

Be bold enough to consider alternatives to meet the community’s long-term vision. It can make a big difference.
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By Patrick Malone

WHY VERTICAL DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

IMPROVE YOUR LEADERSHIP SKILLS BY

› Understand why people feel mired in predictable and constraining workplaces.
› Learn the steps to be able to go beyond "the way we do things around here."
› Gain an appreciation for freedom of thought and innovative possibilities that come with vertical development.
By Patrick Malone

WHY VERTICAL DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

IMPROVE YOUR LEADERSHIP SKILLS BY THINKING UP

TAKEAWAYS

› Understand why people feel mired in predictable and constraining workplaces.
› Learn the steps to be able to go beyond “the way we do things around here.”
› Gain an appreciation for freedom of thought and innovative possibilities that come with vertical development.
employees to make informed programmatic and promotion decisions.

So what’s wrong with this picture? Is it possible that in the chaos of managing communities, managers tend to depend too heavily on traditional indicators of success?

What about the dreamers who are part of any profession? Are people being allowed to see beyond the immediate spreadsheet or the way it’s always been done to reveal new patterns of thought and practice? Have we made room for thought and reflection that may open new doors to innovative programs for residents?

**Thinking Sideways**

Thinking sideways refers to our natural tendency to stay within the realm of thought in which we find the most comfort. Psychologists use the term horizontal development. Individually, this means we rely on pre-established perceptual filters and ways of doing things that give us a sense of comfort about the world around us.

Professionally, thinking sideways may play out in a number of forms. A county parks specialist may seek a certified park and recreation professional certification, a city planner may strive for recognition by the American Institute of Certified Planners, or a manager might seek a designation similar to ICMA’s Voluntary Credentialing Program.

Not that these are bad. When we think sideways, we draw on our existing knowledge base. This provides validation of individual mastery in an area of expertise, professional growth and development, advancement in the organization, and self-confidence. This may provide a noticeable measure of prestige for the organization.

A good example of translating this concept into the workplace is well-articulated by Harvard Professor Ron Heifetz in his description of technical challenges in the work environment. These include the need to understand and use processes, rules, standards, and subject matter.

Essentially, these are the skill sets we all employ at one time or another. Mastery of these skills is often the baseline prerequisite for employment or advancement in a given profession.

But there is a deeper connection to our comfort with thinking sideways, one driven by our innate human necessity for constancy and predictability. We often embrace this practice as individuals because success allows us to maintain a stable sense of self.

We validate our current way of thinking. We’re able to stay in a place we recognize, enriched by familiar sights, sounds, and experiences. When we’re able to clearly list the success we’ve had on this imaginary horizontal plane, we remain content with goals that may stretch us but seldom challenge us to any significant degree.

Managers and leaders can find sideways thinking successes an easy way to measure and compare staff skills. Personnel decisions become simpler because the completion of a certification, project, or task can be documented. Meeting a measurable performance goal or obtaining a professional one can place an employee ahead of another when competing for promotion or merit increases.

Despite the personal and professional coziness offered by the horizontal mindset or sideways thinking, the downsides are many. Agreeing with comfort levels, limiting ourselves to only what is visibly measurable, and hiding behind pre-established rituals of thought may rob us of our ability to recognize and effectively perform in a volatile and ever-changing workplace.

It is in the unpredictable world of local government where depending on sideways thinking may leave the manager short-handed in his or her ability to effectively lead.

**Thinking Up**

In the complex climate of local government, managers can’t allow themselves to be chained to a horizontal mindset defined by sideways thinking. They
must embrace the challenging task of vertical enlightenment outside their comfort zones and reward those who do. This is thinking up.

Thinking up—once again, vertical development in the psychology scene—is about making new meanings and increasing your perspective. And here’s the bad news: It’s not easy.

The sideways thinking inclination that gives people comfort in consistency, completion, and knowing the answer is precisely what prevents thinking up. And it manifests itself in real ways in the workplace.

The parks specialist seeking certification may have trouble obtaining approval for a course in emotional intelligence. And most worrisome? The individual’s supervisor would struggle to justify the cost of that certification.

The fact is, if managers were pushed to these new levels of development, they would be better prepared to confront what Professor Heifetz refers to as “adaptive challenges,” which refer to those more complex organizational dynamics that tie to something more vague than what is experienced when we depend on expertise alone.

Managers succeeding in the adaptive world are able to take a broader perspective on the work at hand and understand the interplay of more complex systems; they also avoid getting trapped in an either/or frame of mind. But this takes thinking up.

While this change to a vertical perspective is difficult, it’s achievable if approached with an authentic desire for change. Thinking up can lead to better engagement, deeper connections, greater self-awareness, and enhanced collaboration with others—all needs in the world of public management.

The journey encompasses four steps: a willingness to begin with a beginner’s mind, embrace negative capability, learn to unlearn, and envision the visioning. While they may sound somewhat mystical, they open the door to innovation and creativity.

**Start with a Beginner’s Mind**

Coming to work with a beginner’s mind might not be the first thing that pops into your psyche as a city or county manager. In fact, it may sound odd. But the mindset that accompanies such a perspective creates an energy and enthusiasm unmatched by the latest how-to in leadership literature.

The concept of a beginner’s mind represents a childlike curiosity to meet the challenges of leadership without preconceived assumptions, beliefs, expectations or judgments, and it allows us to learn to think of things in ways we’ve never considered before. The experts who are blinded to new ways of interpretation, unwilling to acknowledge fresh and innovative concepts, or deeply rooted in their own biases can create organizational barriers to new ideas and enhanced performance.

While a beginner’s mind may be difficult to achieve, especially in long-standing teams with significant history, the benefits are tremendous. Once
accomplished, individuals who bring this perspective to the workplace can fuel boundless passion and creativity, laying the foundation for the next step in vertical development.

**Embrace Negative Capability**

Sometimes it’s okay not to know. What we don’t know can be more important than what we do know. Yet, managers might avoid addressing, even admitting that they don’t know the answer to a question or issue.

This is understandable because most of us have been taught from an early age that having the answer is tantamount to success. How are we rewarded in high school? By knowing the answers. In college? By passing the exams. In government? By demonstrating decisive action, with little delay, at low cost.

Part of this tendency toward avoiding what isn’t known is due to our need for certainty and for definition. This certainty has been important for accomplishments over thousands of years. Being uncomfortable with not knowing, however, has also yielded poor decisions.

At the turn of the previous century, for example, scientists knew definitively that mental illness was the work of demons. More recently, “science” tagged cholesterol as a deadly killer, spawning a multimillion dollar anti-cholesterol industry. That is, until the 2015 U.S. Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee eliminated cholesterol as a “nutrient of concern,” spawning scientific debate about the real danger.

Not knowing does not mean you don’t know, it simply means not being limited by what we know. When open to this possibility, the potential for better, more innovative decisions is enhanced.

**Learn to Unlearn**

A popular psychological test known as the Stroop task is a classic method used in neuropsychological evaluations to measure mental vitality, flexibility, and a person’s ability to unlearn. During this test, the subject is asked to read the color they see in a list of words.

Each of the words is a color, but each word is printed in a different color that does not correspond to the name (i.e., “red” may be printed in blue ink). Subjects attempting to name the color struggle because of their learned behavior of recognizing the spelling of the word.

The reason this simple exercise is so difficult is because reading a word is an automated task that is rooted in our upbringing, and it takes relatively little mental effort. Taking the time to ignore our impulse to read the word first requires concentrated and deliberate thought.

By comparison, leading in the public sector can easily become an automated process that requires less effort. Government agencies are harbingers of customs, many of which have existed for years, sometimes generations. Once in place, such mores are hard to undo.

Perhaps a department or team has always held a meeting every Monday at 8 a.m. or an organization prepares the same annual report year after year because “this is the way it’s done.” While there may be value to the practice itself, maybe there’s a better way to practice, and a new and better way to achieve a goal.

This act of challenging past practices and relearning them in a new context can often be the first step down the difficult, albeit rewarding, path of unlearning.

**Envision the Visioning**

Unlike organizational vision or vision related to a mission statement, envisioning is simply the verb that ties vertical development together. It includes starting with a beginner’s mind, embracing negative capability, and learning to unlearn.

The philosopher Peter Koestenbaum4 effectively describes envisioning as the ability to shift from the natural to the reflective attitude; from being who you are to reflecting on who you are; from acting out who you are to observing and evaluating who you are; from seeing the world from within your subjective ego to seeing yourself objectively within the world; and from acting to examining your actions.

This is a great challenge for us all. We live and work in a fast-paced environment, fueled by the Internet, with more data, metrics, and information than we can possibly assimilate. We typically consider this to be a good thing. But as far back as 1983, author Donald Michael5 hypothesized that while this influx of intelligence leads to more knowledge and more power, it may not yield the results we hope for.

Leaders actually feel overwhelmed, sense a loss of control, become mis-
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COMING TO WORK WITH A BEGINNER’S MIND MIGHT NOT BE THE FIRST THING THAT POPS INTO YOUR PSYCHE AS A CITY OR COUNTY MANAGER. IN FACT, IT MAY SOUND ODD. BUT THE MINDSET THAT ACCOMPANIES SUCH A PERSPECTIVE CREATES AN ENERGY AND ENTHUSIASM UNMATCHED BY THE LATEST HOW-TO IN LEADERSHIP LITERATURE.

This creates the seeds of true organizational culture change.

Going Beyond the Old Ways

Embracing upward thinking can be a frightening experience. As we let go of those comfortable horizontal tendencies, we may feel a sense of loss as we move to newer levels of development and perspective while simultaneously leaving old ones behind.

The good news is, we never truly leave the old ways behind. We simply go beyond them. They’re still a part of us in deep and meaningful ways. They continue to inform our development, but they do so in an expanded mindset that sees and appreciates more possibilities.

There’s consolation in recognizing that vertical development is something that people value—even if they don’t know it yet. Few, if any, workforce surveys point to the need for leaders to be more technically proficient.

In fact, managers have generally already demonstrated an acceptable level of expertise to get where they are. State and local employees are actually looking for leaders who can be adaptive, build authentic relationships, and provide vision—all products of the vertical mindset.

How to Get There

It’s easy for leaders to enthusiastically assume that they have created environments that nurture thinking differently. In reality, most don’t. The fact is that a focus on performance, metrics, and expertise pervades our local government organizations.

At times thought and reflection can be secondary to production and efficiency, when vertical development would allow teams to explore unknown and unseen possibilities. Perhaps, for example, a public park could be built adjacent to a water treatment plant. Maybe funding sources for a struggling community could be obtained from a new partnership with unexpected partners.

And who would have imagined that one of the most effective ways to improve organ donation would be to link it with obtaining a driver’s license? In order to create an environment where vertical development is valued, leaders must establish a climate of trust, vulnerability, and acceptance.

Trust is the lubricant of any well-functioning organization and absolutely imperative to vertical development. It’s a popular sentiment that trust is earned. In fact, trust is given, and it’s only given when one of the parties extends the offer—when one of the parties trusts first.

Once the climate of trust is introduced, team members feel comfort in being vulnerable and the advantages of negative capability begin to emerge. Previous convictions disappear as individuals admit struggles with uncertainty. Imprisoned mindsets are less likely to stay confined, and new ideas begin to emerge.

Ultimately, workers become more accepting of ambiguity, embracing the adaptive nature of the workplace as a given. Diversity of thought, inclusion of varied opinions, and engaged discourse is welcomed.

There’s a sense of flow and playfulness present in the work climate. Team members take solace in knowing they can be themselves while they feel what it is like to be authentic and accepting of others.

ENDNOTES AND RESOURCES


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Does it really make a difference if a local government adopts a customer-centric culture?

Yes, say government officials in Ottawa County, Michigan, who have undergone training to learn "The Disney Way" of providing quality customer service.

Ottawa County, Michigan, is located in the southwestern section of the state. Located 174 miles west of Detroit and 150 miles northeast of Chicago, the county includes six cities, 17 townships, and one village within 565 square miles. More than 272,000 residents enjoy famous Lake Michigan beaches and 7,000 acres of county parks.

Ottawa County is also a vacation destination with Holland, Michigan's Tulip Time festival and Grand Haven's Coast Guard Festival held during the summer.

Some may wonder about a possible disconnect between the public sector and a Disney-like customer-centric culture. At least in the private sector, competitive forces provide an incentive to emulate outstanding customer service icons like Disney, Starbucks, or Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. Surely, counties already have a monopoly on their services, many of which are regulatory in nature, and Ottawa County is no exception.

Given its assets, why should the county be concerned with customer service? Responding to this question, a county official noted that the county has earned its reputation largely due to the people who live, visit, and do business with it. As such, it owes great service to visitors, residents, and employees. Besides, it's just good business.

When a new business locates within a region, for example, the effect on employment is: 1) a direct impact from the jobs provided by the business itself; 2) an indirect impact if...
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When a new business locates within a region, for example, the effect on employment is: 1) a direct impact from the jobs provided by the business itself; 2) an indirect impact if
the business buys production materials and services locally; and 3) an induced impact or multiplier effect from the flow of wages spent by new employees, which may provide new jobs in other businesses, and in turn, the spending of those wages.

The Michigan Multiplier 2013 (Montgomery Consulting, spring 2013, http://is0.galightmedia.com/northernlakeseconomicalliance/_ORIGINAL_/fs27-1370442191-27000.pdf) reports that Ottawa County’s employment multiplier is 2.12. This means that if a business locates within a county and provides 100 new jobs, 212 additional jobs will be created to support the new business.

If a visiting executive who is searching for a new location within a county has a good customer service experience, it certainly may help his or her decision to locate there. A terrible customer service experience, however, could result in a search for another location.

“Ottawa Way” Customer Service Initiative

After reading the best-selling book The Disney Way, Ottawa County officials contacted the company created by the book’s authors to help the county develop a Disney-like customer service culture. Training began in fall 2012 with the customer service steering team. This group continues to meet monthly to oversee the customer service initiative and to review accomplishments and next steps.

The steering team included key leaders from the 33 departments, offices, courts, and agencies that make up Ottawa County. The first step was total immersion in the Disney Way experience through a series of three, one-half-day workshops over a period of two weeks (see Figure 1).

During initial workshops, the county team came to realize that although the 33 areas ranged from law enforcement to social services, the same Disney Way experience should drive them all. From that point on, Ottawa County’s customer-centric culture would be known as the “Ottawa Way.”

Here are the steering team accomplishments from its initial workshops:

- Developed preliminary dream and vision. Here is the last paragraph of The Ottawa County Customer Service Story: “Imagine a team with a variety of skills—collaborating, engaging one another, and having fun...that work to improve, protect and serve their citizens and the environment. This is Ottawa County and you are the Ottawa Way!”
- Identified preliminary values. The customer service value statement reads: “Empowered to Solve Problems with Integrity and Empathy to Inspire Trust.”
- Established preliminary codes of conduct. Examples of Ottawa County codes: “We live the Golden Rule.” “We take accountability for our actions and decisions.” “We create a culture of service in which every customer is valued!”
- Storyboarded potential barriers to the implementation. A storyboard is a visual display and problem-solving technique that captures, organizes, and prioritizes the thoughts and ideas of everyone on the team. This tool was developed by Walt Disney.
- Developed a road map for change. One of the main tasks was the commitment for everyone in the organization to experience the three-day, customer-centric culture training.

Management Buy-in

The next step to implementing the Ottawa Way was a three-day leadership workshop for 100 front-line leaders.

Becoming customer-centric is not an activity to be checked off during an annual strategic planning process or a performance review, or briefly communicated in a retreat setting. An organization-wide cultural change driven by top management is required for success. Front-line leaders must not only embrace the new culture, they must also believe they have ownership in its development and results. This was the main focus of the leadership workshop.

Here are the front-line leaders’ accomplishments from the three-day workshop:

- Finalized dream and vision.
- Finalized values.
- Finalized codes of conduct.

![FIGURE 1. Disney Way Experience.](image-url)
• Storyboarded potential barriers to the implementation.
• Understood road map for change.
• Understood the Disney Way experience, which means beginning to live the dream, believe, dare, and implement principles.

The Rollout
Upon completion of the leadership workshop, the steering team planned a three-day “Ottawa Way” experience for all employees. For the ensuing year, approximately 60 to 100 employees per session participated in the training that was facilitated on a monthly basis, with a total of 973 employees completing the training.

Local government managers might question why the training needed to be conducted for three days. Couldn’t the principles required for any new culture be communicated in less than a day? If it was that simple, however, countless organizations would be as magical as Disney.

When employees arrive at the three-day training, they do so with a set of values that has been ingrained in them over the course of their careers. Now they are expected to embrace a new set of values, yet they need time to realize that the old values are no longer the best for the organization as a whole.

Here are the employee accomplishments from the three-day training:
• Participated in the Disney Way Experience.
• Storyboarded potential barriers to the implementation.
• Storyboarded solutions to eliminate key barriers.

The Hot Seat
During the afternoon of the second day of training, participants experienced the “Hot Seat” segment. The county administrator and two of the steering team department heads were members of the Hot Seat panel. Participants were invited to ask the panel any questions pertaining to the Ottawa Way or to County operations.

How the “Hot Seat” benefits the staff: 1) top leaders being available, displaying candor, and demonstrating support to employees; and 2) trust and open communication established between management staff and the workforce.

A question asked at every session was “How can we provide excellent customer service when in government the answer is not and cannot always be yes?”

The answer: It is all about how you treat someone. We use the Golden Rule that stresses that people treat others as they wish to be treated.

Storyboard Treasure Trove
Something of extraordinary and unanticipated benefit resulted from the training. As many as 480 storyboards provided a wealth of information about what county employees think; 452 storyboards displayed concerns that pertained to management and leadership. Lack of trust in management, poor communication, and little coaching and feedback were a few of the topics of concern.

Participants, by way of 1,406 storyboard response cards, communicated that improvements in leadership, empowerment, accountability, encouragement, and setting clear expectations and direction were needed. Lead by example, live the Golden Rule, and provide more feedback were some of the ideas for improvement.

The Leadership Challenge
The storyboard process is an ideal way for leaders to gain anonymous feedback and to engage their entire teams. A powerful way to begin helping leaders to become more effective, which was one of the concerns that emerged through county employee storyboards, is to conduct a leadership storyboard.

As an author of this article and the workshop trainer, I challenged Al to allow his direct reports to participate in this exercise in which they answered the question, “What is the ultimate leader?” After an initial briefing with staff, Al left the room so that they would have total freedom to continue the process by ranking what is most important to them, what Al “does best,” and which areas are “opportunities for improvement.”

Al admitted being a little nervous with the process, but he saw great value in the results. As a next step, both elected and appointed county leaders completed the leadership storyboard process within their own departments.

Brain Trust Follow-up and Next Steps
Ed Catmull, president of Disney and Pixar Animation Studios, was quoted in the book as saying that “A hallmark of a healthy creative culture is that its people feel free to share ideas.”

One of the best ways to produce this type of environment is by establishing a brain trust, which is a group of people who assist, advise, and support one another but do not have authority to make decisions for each other’s teams or departments. In
The county is on the verge of creating a leadership brain trust, which will be seven groups composed of 15 to 20 middle-management leaders and one facilitator, along with one group of upper management with a facilitator.

Like the leadership storyboard, the brain trust is intended to improve county leaders’ effectiveness. Each leader will complete a self-assessment customer service implementation questionnaire by rating teams in these categories:

- Constant purpose and improvement and forever using the system of customer service.
- Institute training in codes of conduct, customer service values, and quality.
- Believe in elements of the show or customer experience.
- Eliminate fear.
- Break down barriers between departments.
- Remove barriers to pride of workmanship.

Every 10 weeks after the initial meeting, brain trust meetings will be held to provide updates on the progress of implementing Ottawa Way and to help leaders identify and solve problems.

The Future
After the Ottawa Way training sessions were completed in the fall of 2014, the county created an 18-member customer service team with representation from county department operations. With the same lead facilitator, the team can coordinate with the brain trust. Here are team initiatives:

- Determine next steps to customer service training.
- Determine ways to help customers better navigate county buildings and the phone system.
- Find ways of providing more services to residents with the use of technology.
- Implement customer service best practices.
- Implement an ambassador program to assist new employees with on-boarding as they transition to county employment and to create a network, which provides a resource to all employees seeking information on programs, departments, people, buildings, and more.

Early successes have been amazing, particularly considering that the Ottawa Way is still relatively new. A quarterly Outstanding Customer Service Award that began in January 2014 has netted an average of 70 employee nominations each quarter.

A sheriff’s deputy was nominated for a customer service award after issuing a traffic ticket to a motorist. The Public Health Department’s restaurant inspection division, heavily criticized by many restaurants just three years ago, has received 87 customer service nominations from the private businesses they serve. Businesses praised the transition from a highly regulatory “gotcha” attitude to more of an attitude of educating and coaching, thus becoming a valued partner.

These are just a few examples of great stories emerging that celebrate county employees going above and beyond the call of duty. The county references achievements on its website at http://miottawa.org/CustomerService/outstanding_current.htm.

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One of the 480 storyboard sessions held with Ottawa County employees.

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A few years ago, the notion of having the 33 different areas of the county singing the same customer service tune seemed like an impossible dream; however, as Walt Disney said, “If you can dream it, you can do it.” That is the Disney Way, and now it is the Ottawa Way, too.

AL VANDERBERG is county administrator, Ottawa County, Michigan (avanderberg@miottawa.org). BILL CAPODAGLI is president, Capodagli Jackson Consulting, Winter Garden, Florida (dreamovations@aol.com) and coauthor of The Disney Way (2nd edition, McGraw-Hill, 2006).
general, the members also help each other become more effective leaders. The county is on the verge of creating a leadership brain trust, which will be seven groups composed of 15 to 20 middle-management leaders and one facilitator, along with one group of upper management with a facilitator. Like the leadership storyboard, the brain trust is intended to improve county leaders' effectiveness. Each leader will complete a self-assessment customer service implementation questionnaire by rating teams in these categories:

• Constant purpose and improvement and forever using the system of customer service.
• Institute training in codes of conduct, customer service values, and quality.
• Believe in elements of the show or customer experience.
• Eliminate fear.
• Break down barriers between departments.
• Remove barriers to pride of workmanship.

Every 10 weeks after the initial meeting, brain trust meetings will be held to provide updates on the progress of implementing Ottawa Way and to help leaders identify and solve problems.

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The legal marijuana market is one of the fastest growing industries in the United States.1 Some 54 California cities and counties have accepted the change in society’s view of marijuana and have adopted ordinances allowing medical marijuana dispensaries in their jurisdictions.2 If marijuana is fully legalized for recreational sale to adults in 2016 as predicted by some analysts, then more local governments will be considering similar actions. Those localities that allow dispensaries stand to gain substantial tax revenues. California’s 2013 marijuana harvest (legal and illegal), for example, was worth $31 billion.3 Legal medical marijuana sales in California totaled a little over a billion dollars in 2014.4 If recreational use of marijuana is legalized, a large portion of the annual marijuana harvest will begin generating tax revenues for the state and for the local jurisdictions that allow dispensaries.

Since marijuana remains illegal under federal law, banks fear being implicated as money launderers, so they frequently decline medical marijuana organizations as customers. This puts retailers’ safety at risk and creates problems for the collectives when paying taxes and managing employee payroll. “The crime potential for an all-cash business, whether that’s robbery, burglary or assault—violent crimes—or tax evasion, fraud, and skimming—white-collar crimes—is pretty substantial,” observed Colorado Representative Ed Perlmutter.5 He added that “It is not fair to small businesses and employees in Colorado, and in 33 other states and the District of Columbia, where some form of marijuana is legal or decriminalized, to be forced out of the banking system and discriminated against by the federal government.”6 In February 2014, the Obama administration allowed the banking industry to do business with legal marijuana sellers.7 For the first time, legal distributors can set up checking and savings accounts with major banks. This lays out a path for bringing marijuana commerce out of the shadows and into the mainstream financial system. Banks, however, remain reluctant because nothing in the guidance protects a bank from future prosecution if a new administration decides to prosecute state-licensed companies for violating federal drug laws, analysts say.7

Case History: Richmond

In 2010, the city council of Richmond, California, amended its municipal code to permit up to three medical marijuana collectives in the city. An ordinance approved by citizens in the November 2, 2010, general election requires that a business license tax be collected. The code requires each dispensary to:

- File an application for a permit and pay a nonrefundable permit processing and notification fee.
- Obtain a seller’s permit from the California Board of Equalization.
- Demonstrate evidence of a computerized telephonic system for communicating with other dispensaries in the city to ensure a patient does not receive more than one ounce of marijuana per day.
- Provide for monitoring of the property at all times by closed-circuit television.
- Maintain written accounting of all cash, in-kind contributions, reimbursements, compensation, and expenditures received or paid by the dispensary.
- Maintain inventory records of dates and quantities of marijuana cultivated and stored.
- File quarterly business license tax returns and pay 5 percent of gross revenues to the city.

Three dispensaries began operations in the city during 2012. Gross sales for the three dispensaries in calendar 2013, the first full year of operations, totaled approximately $5 million, with approximately 75 percent being generated by the largest. The three dispensaries paid approximately $250,000 of business license tax to the city for calendar year 2013.

Finance Director James Goins decided an audit of the dispensaries was needed to determine whether they were paying...
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CALIFORNIA STATE LAW VERSUS FEDERAL LAW

APPROVED BY CALIFORNIA VOTERS, Proposition 215—the Compassionate Use Act of 1996—allows seriously ill Californians the right to obtain and use marijuana for medical purposes when it has been recommended by a physician.

The California state legislature passed the Medical Marijuana Program Act in 2004, establishing a voluntary identification card program and a legal framework for collectives and cooperatives to distribute medical marijuana. Each county’s health department issues optional identification cards for patients.

These identification cards are issued after the county verifies the cardholder’s status as a patient or primary caregiver. The cards offer legal protection from arrest for possession of up to eight ounces of usable marijuana and cultivation of up to six mature or 12 immature plants. Only 2 percent of the approximately 500,000 California patients obtained identification cards in fiscal year 2012-13.9

The Medical Marijuana Program Act allows patients to form not-for-profit collectives or cooperatives to cultivate and distribute medical marijuana. These cooperatives and collectives may operate dispensaries that sell to qualified patients.

A cooperative or collective must be a not-for-profit organization and properly organized under state law. It cannot purchase marijuana from or sell to nonmembers, but instead can only provide a means for facilitating transactions between members.

Medical marijuana patients must have a recommendation from a licensed physician. Physicians may not prescribe marijuana because the Food and Drug Administration, which regulates prescription drugs, and federal law—the 1970 Controlled Substances Act (CSA)—make it unlawful to manufacture, distribute, dispense, or possess any controlled substance.

The CSA identified marijuana as a drug with “no currently accepted medical use.” Physicians, however, may issue a verbal or written recommendation under state law indicating that marijuana would be a beneficial treatment for a serious or persistent medical condition.

In 2007, the California Board of Equalization confirmed its policy of taxing medical marijuana transactions, as well as its requirement that businesses engaged in such transactions hold a seller’s permit. Sales are taxable even if the seller does not make a profit.5

Cities and counties have the authority to adopt local ordinances that ban or regulate the location, operation, or establishment of a medical marijuana cooperative or collective in their jurisdictions.10

The incongruity between California state law and federal law has given rise to understandable confusion. Congress has provided that states are free to regulate in the area of controlled substances, provided that state law does not positively conflict with the CSA.

Neither Proposition 215 nor the Medical Marijuana Program Act conflict with the CSA because, in adopting these laws, California did not legalize medical marijuana, but instead exercised the state’s right to not punish certain marijuana offenses under state law when a physician has recommended its use to treat a serious medical condition.

Insights from the Audits

Audits of the city’s three medical marijuana collectives included:

- Reading the city’s ordinances.
- Discussing concerns and issues with city finance and police management.
- Requesting and reviewing documents from the collectives that included:
  » Revenue reports showing each revenue transaction, including cash collected, credit received, and in-kind contributions received.
  » Inventory record showing dates and quantities of marijuana added to inventory and sold each day.
  » California sales tax returns.
  » Federal income tax returns.
  » Bank statements and related bank reconciliations.
  » General ledger reports and profit-and-loss statements.
  » Narrative description of procedures followed by the collectives related to collection, billing, depositing, and recording revenue.

- Testing the reasonableness of reported gross revenues by:
  » Verifying the mathematical accuracy of the business tax returns.
  » Tracing reported gross revenue to the collective’s general ledger report and profit-and-loss statement.
  » Reconciling reported gross revenue to revenue per state sales tax returns and federal income tax returns.
  » Selecting a sample of individual revenue transactions, tracing to bank statement, and examining supporting documents.
  » Reviewing allowable deductions (cash discounts, volume discounts, promotional discounts, inven-
tory clearance discounts, refunds, federal excise tax, and sales and use (tax) for reasonableness.

» Reviewing the cash reconciliations for unusual items, verifying mathematical accuracy, and tracing to bank statements and general ledger reports.

• Preparing a report, including procedures performed, schedules of gross revenues and tax collected for each collective, and recommendations for improvement in collective procedures or city procedures.

> No federal income tax returns.

Another audit issue is tied to the confidentiality laws regarding patient names. Depending on how the dispensary maintained its records of sales transactions, patient names needed to be removed from documents before being provided to us.

If there is no other field used to identify an individual patient—a unique patient number—then it’s not possible to test whether patients are being sold more than one ounce per day or to ensure receipts relate to the transaction being tested.

Those localities that allow marijuana dispensaries need to have procedures in place to assure that they comply with local laws and remit the full amount of business taxes owed.

We noted that most sales of marijuana are cash sales. Because medical marijuana collectives often have difficulty establishing banking relationships (see sidebar, “California State Law Versus Federal Law”), most of the collectives’ revenues were not deposited in the bank. This created the unusual auditing issues of being unable to confirm cash balances by reviewing bank records and being unable to compare amounts of revenues and expenditures to bank debits and credits.

The three dispensaries began operations in 2012. Two of them are small businesses and like many of the city’s other community-based organizations, did not maintain good accounting and inventory records nor document important procedures. Examples of missing or inadequate accounting information included:

> Lack of inventory records.

> No list of sales transactions.

> Tardy filing of federal tax returns (by two years).

We noted that the city did not have adequate procedures in place to test the reasonableness of the quarterly business license taxes that were being collected from the collectives. The city also was not complying with the municipal code related to timing of tax collections and assessing late penalties and interest.

As a result of these issues, we were not able to conclude whether the dispensaries were paying the correct amount of business license taxes. Instead, our audit recommendations focused on the issues the city needed to address in order to adequately oversee the dispensaries going forward, including complying with the code, improving communications with the collectives, and testing the reasonableness of the quarterly taxes remitted.

Substantial Tax Revenues

A growing number of California cities and counties are adopting ordinances allowing medical marijuana dispensaries to operate in their jurisdictions and again, because the market for marijuana is large, the tax revenues that will be generated are expected to be substantial. Those localities that allow marijuana dispensaries need to have procedures in place to assure that they comply with local laws and remit the full amount of business taxes owed.

As local governments begin regulating marijuana dispensaries, and as the federal government allows them to participate in the U.S. banking system, it appears that marijuana operations are emerging from the shadows. RM

FOOTNOTES AND RESOURCES
10. California Assembly Bill 1300, Date of Hearing April 26, 2011.

Kevin Harper, CPA, is managing partner, Kevin W. Harper CPA & Associates, Castro Valley, California (kharper@kevinharpercpa.com).
Let me set the stage for the proposal I offer at the end of this commentary.

Some people who resided in my childhood neighborhood were afflicted with unusual physical ailments, or least I thought so when I was young. The strangest for me was Pobre Pepito.

Pepito was deaf and afflicted with palsy. He communicated with flailing arms, rolling eyes, grunts, and moans.

As a young boy, I remember my first encounter with him in 1968. It was a hot Saturday afternoon in Westside San Antonio, and my father, after having finished his “mandados” or chores for the day, stopped at a local business. I stayed in the back of our station wagon to lay down and get relief from the sun.

Soon I heard a commotion and raised my curious head only to be confronted by Pepito standing directly in front of me outside the car window. He was highly emotional, almost hysterical, and I was scared stiff.

But as I sat there frozen staring into his eyes, I saw pain and anguish reflected in them. He was not a threat. He was in need of help. My father, having heard Pepito, came outside, calmed him, and gave him some money. I was never afraid of Pepito again.

That Scenario Today

Now I wonder how a police encounter with Pepito would go today? What would be the response when the 911 call is received about a man acting crazy and violent and scaring everyone?

Add to the mixture that the police would be responding to the “deep Westside” as I recently saw it labeled in a caricature of a San Antonio map. Would the arriving officers know that Pepito was incapable of verbal communication? Would they know that his wild behavior was due to his medical condition and a lifetime of suffering and alienation?

How would the police subdue him? Taser? Nonlethal shotgun? Baton and cuffs?

I ask these questions because our management jobs require us to think and make decisions about how law enforcement interacts with residents.

Questioning Conventional Tactics

As a local government manager of 30 years, I know police forces are full of good people dedicated to serving the public. I even lost a city manager job defending a police chief.

I do, however, question the paramilitary tactics and deployment strategies that are seen as conventional in today’s law enforcement.

First, they scare people and do not make them feel safer. Seeing military vehicles on the streets and local police dressed in SWAT and riot gear signals to the world that we are on the verge of anarchy.

Second, the show of overt military force is meant to coerce the citizenry into submission. Fear is used to subdue dissent and opposition to the prevailing political authority, which has a legal monopoly on the use of law enforcement. Cities and counties manage the local police forces, and residents rely on managers to make sure someone polices the police.

It is also important to ask what created the conflict in the first place—the crime or the police response. There was sufficient evidence that Michael Brown and Eric Garner had committed crimes. Both men were known in their communities. The arrests could have simply occurred later. In the case of Eric Garner, a citation for selling loose cigarettes given by a code or parking enforcement officer may have sufficed.

Community-oriented policing was the established norm in local law enforcement before September 11, 2001. I can’t recall how many neighborhood policing meetings I attended before the attack on the World Trade Center.

It was at those meetings in the Texas communities of San Antonio, Santa Barbara, Denton, Laredo, Las Cruces, and San José where trust and confidence was established and built between law enforcement and the community. Each new neighborhood policing substation was a kept promise to work directly with residents.

The Manager’s Role?

What role do we as local government managers have to ensure effective police interaction with our communities? Not just with the prominent, well-known members of our society, but also with the more obscure fringe residents who include communities of color; the poor and homeless; the undocumented; the political, religious, and economic refugees; and the mentally ill.

I venture to say that we have an important role to play and a responsibility to ensure that all residents feel safe and calm during troubled times. But that work is done up-front with the community, not after the damage has been inflicted and trust has been eroded.

I propose that we restart the discussion on community policing as a means to counteract the current views on police, and in the process, save not only our communities but also individuals like Pepito—may he rest in peace.
I submit this as an individual council-member of East Palo Alto, California, and not on behalf of the council. After reading an article titled “Celebrate Ethical Conduct” in the March 2015 issue of ICMA’s Public Management magazine (Ethics Matter! department) highlighting Cal-ICMA’s Ethical Hero award honoring a former city manager of East Palo Alto, I feel compelled to address some of the implications raised by the article.

The article implies that the city council of East Palo Alto did something illegal or unethical by not renewing the former manager’s contract. This tacit assertion is wrong and irresponsible, and it is uncharacteristic of ICMA’s professional standards.

The term of the manager’s contract simply expired. Neither the city council nor the manager was obligated to renew the contract. Both the council and the manager had fulfilled their obligations under the contract.

Furthermore, it is not uncommon for a contract to expire when either one or both parties decide that they have no interest in continuing their contractual relationship. No justification or explanation is required and not providing any justification or explanation is not unethical, improper, or illegal.

The city council did welcome and listened to the manager’s professional advice; however, the role of the council is to make policy decisions and the council is not compelled to accept staff’s policy recommendations. Regardless of the council’s opinion of the manager’s professional advice, members of our community expressed concern to the council about her advice, especially in the areas of the enforcement of the city’s rent stabilization and just cause for eviction ordinance and tenant protection ordinance.

The city has been fiercely challenged and has successfully defended its rent stabilization and just cause for eviction ordinance multiple times in the courts. The council is committed to defending the implementation of this ordinance in order to protect residents’ rights, especially in light of the intense housing crisis that exists in Silicon Valley, and there is nothing unethical or illegal about the council listening to the concerns of our residents.

Though I have been critical of the article, I in no way wish to leave an impression that I am not supportive of the Cal-ICMA’s ethics award. I believe such an award is important as it recognizes that ethics and integrity are the cornerstones of professional local government management. And when these attributes are violated, it damages the public’s sense of trust for all local government professionals. The city of Bell, California’s scandal is a good example.

In contrast, what occurred in East Palo Alto was not unethical or illegal. In our case, there were honest differences between the city manager and the city council on matters of policy, which are undeniably in the purview of the council.

I wish to thank you in advance for allowing me to clarify the facts so that the good names of East Palo Alto and its councilmembers are not unjustly tarnished by the article’s suggestions of wrongdoing.
GOVERNANCE RESILIENCY
Build capacity before you need it

The Alliance for Innovation held its annual BIG Ideas Conference in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, late last year. Featuring keynote and facilitation by author Peter Kageyama and Alliance Resident Futurist Rebecca Ryan, the gathering provided topic-specific talks that were right on point for managers.

The theme of the conference was resiliency and the gathering looked at that topic from myriad perspectives—organizational, community, and personal. Since I filter so much of my world through the lens of good governance, I managed to hear repeatedly how important the relationship is between the parties of citizen owners, elected representatives, and professional administrators.

Whether it is preparing for, surviving, and recovering from a natural disaster, economic upheaval, or organizational misstep, one thing was clear: If you wait until the issue is upon you to hone and polish your governance relationships and risk tolerance, it is way too late. The opportunity to be resilient is gone and survival is at stake.

A Prime Example
Former president of the National League of Cities Jim Hunt, a 28-year elected official and friend and colleague of mine, put it this way in his talk: “In order for me to rely on you in the midst of difficult times, I must have already been able to rely on you in the day-to-day times. In order for our relationship to be resilient enough to survive and thrive in recovery and reemergence, we must have already faced challenges together.”

Jack Seiler, mayor of Fort Lauderdale, set the stage for attendees by going beyond the usual “welcome and spend money” talk that mayors can give to speak about the critical nature of his relationship with City Manager Lee Feldman. Hugely accomplished in his own right by having served as a mayor of a neighboring community and in the state legislature before becoming mayor of Fort Lauderdale, Seiler said, “As elected officials and as a community, we absolutely have to rely on the professionalism, skills, and training of our city staff—fortunately we have one of the best in Lee.”

Having had the opportunity to observe Jack and Lee in action, it is clear that their partnership is based on mutual respect and a clear understanding of the strengths each brings to the table. By tackling the daily tasks and performing at an exemplary level—each in their own sphere—they are well positioned to face and overcome the future challenges that most certainly will come.

Only One Step Away
The group also talked about the need to invest in oneself in order to nurture personal resiliency. One thing is clear in our fast-paced, 24-hour news cycle world: We are only an organizational misstep—or perceived misstep—away from being the lead story on all the cable news and the online viral story of the day.

Charlotte, North Carolina, City Manager Ron Carlee’s writing on this topic titled The Emotional Resilience of Managers: Surviving the Slings and Arrows of Othertageous Fortune, which can be found at icma.org, is absolutely on point. Regularly taking care of themselves both physically and emotionally, and developing strong relationships, managers build the capacity to face the future more confidently. When we know internally that we can deal with adversity, we are less likely to panic and certainly more able to recover.

Everyone agreed that having built a reputation of being fair, open, and honest before the crisis at least buys the moment to allow cooler heads to prevail. With the right reputation, we earn the opportunity to share our side of the story, and after the frenzy is over, can rebuild frayed feelings.

Just as resilience capacity is cumulative and takes time to build, so it is with governance capacity:

• Do you have a list of people you would call in the event of a community incident or emergency? Have you already called them in quiet times in order to establish the trust necessary for them to take your call when it truly matters?
• Does your council know what to expect from you personally during an incident?
• Are the details of who will speak for your councilmembers to help them build their governing resilience to being in the spotlight in a potentially challenging way?
• Do you have a personal support network of folks you can rely on to not only help you get through the crisis but normalize afterwards?

Remember: The time to prepare for recovery is before the need arises. PM
s do many communities, Fairfield, Ohio, benefits from residents who choose to leave lasting legacies. Located 20 miles north of Cincinnati, Fairfield is a post-war suburban community. Incorporated in 1955, it is home to 45,000 residents today.

Within the past few years, Fairfield has opened two new multimillion dollar parks and recreation facilities without the use of city tax dollars, thanks to the generosity of its residents, both those who have passed on as well as those working to keep the community a vibrant place to live.

Both projects were funded primarily through generous private donations and in-kind contributions from groups and individual community members. One facility meets the needs of the area’s youth and adults with special needs, while the other provides environmental stewardship learning opportunities for families and individuals.

**Miracle League Fields**
Former major league baseball player and longtime Cincinnati Reds radio announcer Joe Nuxhall had the vision for the Hatton Park/Nuxhall Miracle League Fields. Nuxhall is most remembered for having been the youngest player ever to appear in a major league game, pitching two-thirds of an inning for the Reds at the age of 15 years and 316 days. He was called upon for that one game due to player shortages during World War II. Nuxhall went on to have a 16-year major league career and a 40-year career as the Reds radio broadcaster.

Locally, Nuxhall is most remembered in the community for his philanthropic efforts. One of his dreams was that every child should have the opportunity to play baseball, regardless of any physical or mental limitation. He shared his dream with the city, and it responded in 2009 by providing a six-acre parcel of city-owned property for two handicapped-friendly ball fields. The property, adjacent to the city’s youth football fields and public utilities campus, was part of a 30-acre buffer between the facilities and the neighborhoods.

Unfortunately, Nuxhall died before seeing his dream come true. With the site secured, however, Joe’s son, Kim, continued his father’s dream and began fund-raising efforts through the Nuxhall Foundation. The community embraced the concept and major financial and 3,000-man-hours of electrical work alone were donated.

Other philanthropic gestures included a local excavator, using his under-used labor pool, donating all the site work on the project. A local sign company also donated the lighted LED scoreboards and video boards.

The seven-year dream became a reality with the construction of the region’s first multifield baseball complex suitable for tournament play for the disabled. The complex was dedicated on the 68th anniversary of Joe Nuxhall’s first major league appearance, July 28, 2012.

The complex was specially designed and equipped so that athletes with special needs have the opportunity to play baseball. Two rubberized fields...
Throughout spring, summer, and fall, more than 1,000 individuals are able to participate in sports at the facility.

Community to participate in youth baseball and adult softball, and it is used for the local school district’s special education classes. Throughout spring, summer, and fall, more than 1,000 individuals are able to participate in sports at the facility.

Huffman Park: A Natural Discovery Center

The 22-acre Huffman Farm had been a part of the Fairfield community for generations. Mr. and Mrs. Harold Huffman owned the property for more than 50 years, purchasing it from Huffman’s grandfather, who came to America in the 1800s from Germany.

The couple did not have children, but had several nieces and nephews who spent many summers enjoying the outdoors on the farm. Maintaining the farm as natural open spaces and providing outdoor activities for children were the Huffman’s wishes prior to their passing.

The Huffman family established the Anna and Harold W. Huffman Foundation to make their wish a reality. To fulfill the Huffman’s dreams, the foundation approached several parks agencies, including Fairfield, and requested proposals for the use of the property.

The foundation selected the city’s proposal to transform the property into a “children’s natural discovery center.” It not only donated the property to the city but also provided $900,000 to fund the site’s development. The park was to be designed to provide an interactive outdoor learning experience for the community, operated by the city’s Parks and Recreation Department and funded through the department’s programming and general fund budgets.

One of the challenges during construction was whether to use the farmhouse that was located on the property. The foundation had requested that the farmhouse be used onsite if possible.

To refurbish the house into a nature center proved to be cost prohibitive. With agreement of the foundation, the materials were repurposed throughout the site. The house was deconstructed on the site by a local nonprofit social agency, which provides hands-on training for novices to acquire skills necessary to work in the building trades.

The house was taken apart from the roof down through the deconstruction process, and materials were recycled, salvaged, or repurposed on-site. Stone from the house was incorporated into the park and used to construct the restrooms, shelters, park signage, and fire pit.

The park was designed to provide an interactive learning experience, and it features learning stations located throughout the half-mile paved walking trail, as well as a play area that includes such structures found in nature as a balance-beam log, tree steppers, a ring of boulders, and two earthen mounds with slides and a tunnel.

The butterfly garden features a butterfly climbing structure and a maze mound intertwined with “butterfly friendly” landscaping. Since children enjoy socializing on a playground, special flower talk tubes were installed to allow the children to stand at opposite ends of the garden and communicate back and forth. The hillside is lined with trees, creating a fruit and nut orchard.

An aeration windmill sends air into an on-site retention pond through an airline buried underground, and then air is released into the pond in the form of bubbles. This is designed to keep the pond algae free and mosquitos away. Community gardens were installed to keep with the farming theme.

These two projects, although different in scope, brought the spirit of community together and provide a lasting legacy to the Nuxhall and Huffman families. Through the generosity and resolve of the community, the two public/private partnership achievements offer unique recreational opportunities, and are a definite source of pride for the city of Fairfield.
The Huffman family established the Huffman Park: A Natural Discovery Center. The couple did not have children, one of many reasons they wanted to do something for the community. The Huffman Park management minute continued.

Huffman’s wishes prior to their passing. The Huffman Park: A Natural Discovery Center concluded. The Huffman family established the Huffman Park: A Natural Discovery Center.

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It’s finally Friday night, the beginning of a weekend of freedom, which also happens to include your birthday. Your family, friends, and spouse have a celebratory plan for you.

You have a rewarding career and a network of beautiful people who want to rejoice in your life. As you walk out to your car to officially kick off the fun, a giddy thrill washes over you.

But as you click the seatbelt into place, rather than sitting in awe of how lucky you are, a list of concerns begins worming its way into your consciousness: “I need gas, but the conveniently located gas station charges more than others . . . I hope it’s not a surprise party . . . Maybe I should get the beverages before going home . . . I haven’t been to the gym all week . . . Did I pay the electric bill?” And so it goes.

Here are 10 strategies to help you effectively enjoy the present:

1. **Cure your destination disease.** Live more for today, less for tomorrow, and never about yesterday. How? You might have to repeatedly remind yourself that yesterday is gone forever, yet we perpetually have to deal with now, so why not live it? And what if tomorrow never occurs? If tomorrow never comes, would you be satisfied with the way today ended?

2. **Stop living your life 30 minutes ahead.** How many times—when you are eating lunch, taking a break, or having dinner with your family—are you thinking about what you have to do after the meal? On too many occasions, we are living our life ahead of where we are now.

3. **Live your life.** Our lives are sometimes in the fast lane with no exit ramp in sight. We end up there because everyone else is speeding toward his or her definition of success and we haven’t learned that instead of keeping up with the Joneses, we need to bring them down to our level. Live your life based on your aspirations.

4. **Stop comparing yourself to others.** Comparison prohibits you from seeing your uniqueness. Never be content with someone else’s definition of you. We waste more time and encounter more bumps in the road when we let someone else make us feel inferior without our consent.

5. **Laugh more!** Don’t put your umbrella up until it rains. Worry restricts your ability to think and act effectively, and it forces you to mortgage fear and anxiety about something that may never occur. Laughter is the opposite. When you laugh, you’re living almost completely in the moment, and it’s one of the best feelings you can have.

6. **Always do what is right.** When you come to the fork in the road, always turn right. How do you know you should turn right? Simple: Whenever you go right, you can’t go wrong. The ride is easier when you make principled decisions.

7. **No one can ruin your day without your permission.** As much as we cannot control in life—our genes, our past, and what has led up to today—there is much control we may take upon ourselves. Life picks on everyone, so don’t take it personally. When we take misfortune personally, we tend to obsess, giving a legacy to something that may make you a day poorer in life.

8. **Abundance is the result of appreciation, not accumulation.** By always chasing after something else, you are never really appreciating what you already have right now.

9. **Assume there will be detours.** When was the last time you grew as an individual? Chances are, it was during a time when you were challenged the most. Maturity, completeness, and contentment are at stake when you face problems. Challenges will help you grow.

10. **Don’t drive straight through without stopping.** It is not how you start in life and it is not how you finish. The true joy of life is in the trip, so enjoy the ride! 

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**STEVE GILLILAND**, writer and speaker, is author of the books *Enjoy the Ride*, *Making a Difference*, *Hide Your Goat*, and *Detour, Developing the Mindset to Navigate Life’s Turns*, Freeport, Pennsylvania (www.stevegilliland.com).
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