

Alabama Community Leadership Network (ACLN)

Happy Spring From the ACLN

Hello, we hope that you find this ACLN Newsletter helpful as you work to build new leadership programs, or perhaps the revitalization of an existing leadership program!

Many of you participated in the ACLN Forum held in Clanton, Alabama on October 12, 2017. We had an excellent Forum with 64 attendees! The agenda included a wide range of presentations from excellent speakers that provided some new resources for leadership development.

Please keep us updated on your community leadership events/projects. Send photos and a description of your leadership events to be highlighted in our quarterly newsletters. Please submit this information via e-mail to: Martha.whitson@ua.edu.

Leadership and Humor



The word **leadership** came into existence around the early 1800's. After that, it took nearly 100 years before social scientists undertook serious studies to try to better understand the phenomenon of leadership. Leadership has been intensely investigated and I have read several research reports on the subject focusing on such questions as:

- How does one become a leader?**
- What are the skills/characteristics of a leader?**
- How do leaders impact group performance?**
- How do leaders deal with change?**
- Why do people follow leaders?**
- How are leaders effective?**

Recently, I was reading an article on leadership and humor. Yes, leadership and humor, meaning that you can use humor to enhance your local leadership development programs. The main points from the article simply stated that if you get people laughing, you can get them to learn almost anything and they will remember it longer. Regardless of one's background or knowledge of leadership, it is clear that people understand and appreciate humor. Therefore, humor is a universal language and a connecting point for building new information. Listed below are a few reasons why you should consider using humor in your local leadership program.

HUMOR DEVELOPS A POSITIVE CULTURE

Humor reinforces the absurdity of rigid, inflexible behavior and

misunderstanding and helps us remember that mistakes are natural and widespread in all humanity.

Practical Application: Before using humor in your program, consider the audience. Consider the course materials and make sure the humor is directly related to the content. Lastly, practice the humor on colleagues, friends or family members before use in your program.

HUMOR CREATES ENTHUSIASM, MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Everyone likes a good joke and people like to make others laugh. Individuals remember information associated with jokes because they have to pay more attention to humorous items in order to “get the joke.”

Practical Application: Get to know your audience before the training event. Give individuals a fun-quiz to find their likes, dislikes and to learn more about them. Don't be afraid to ask individuals if something is funny or not. This information will help you to determine the appropriate humor to use in your program.

HUMOR REDUCES TENSION AND STRESS

Research informs us that when a person laughs, the body secretes endorphins (brain's painkillers) into the body. Laughter appears to be the perfect antidote for stress and can lower one's blood pressure.

Practical Application: Start your training event with introductions from each participant. Ask everyone to say something humorous about themselves. Also consider having a joke board as part of your program. Participants can post cartoons, websites, or jokes that relate to the training materials.

HUMOR HELPS TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Humor builds teamwork by reinforcing established relationships and helping new members assimilate into the group. Humor builds trust within the team.

Practical Application: Use humorous illustrations in training materials, establish a CHO (Chief Humor Officer) to supply jokes/humor and provide positive reinforcement for using humor (goofy awards, etc.) in your program.

HUMOR INCREASES COMMUNICATION

One of the most widely researched effects of humor is its enhancement of communication. One researcher noted that humor is a communicative tactic to engender support. Using humor creates a happy and positive atmosphere.

Practical Application: YouTube or other websites on the Internet are filled with funny videos that work great for enhancing communication. The best videos tend to run from 30 seconds to only a few minutes, which is long enough to get the point but short enough not to bore the participants. Build a video library of humorous content that is appropriate and related to the course materials in your program.

Please consider some of the aforementioned strategies regarding humor to enhance your leadership program. When using humor, always remember that humor should never be used to embarrass, ridicule or harm someone. The humor used in your program should be appropriate and to the ability level of your audience (program participants). And don't simply ignore humor, even if you feel that you are not a funny (humorous) person. Try it, get help and remember, humor doesn't hurt!

References:

- Gordon, Thomas. Leader Effectiveness Training. New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 2001.

- Harvey Michael and Barbour Danelo. Global Leadership. College Park: James MacGregor Burns Leadership Academy, 2009.

Resources and Capacity Building

Effective Grant Writing Tips: Part I

Introduction

Grant support is often the object of considerable attention and effort on the part of local governments and non-profit organizations. Such outside financial support can play a significant role in allowing cities, counties and non-profits to accomplish their goals and address needs that might otherwise be unmet. Grant funds can be particularly important to non-profit organizations, rural communities and small towns that have very limited financial resources.

Before You Do Anything

There is a substantial commitment of time and organizational resources required to developing a quality grant proposal. The grant development effort can involve several individuals from within an agency over many weeks, and may involve outside consultants and partner organizations such as other local governments, non-profits or school systems. It is imperative that you identify the key stakeholders in your proposed effort as early as possible in the development process.

Second, it is very important that the organization thinks carefully about the grant opportunity as something that fits well within their own plans and circumstances -- that applying for and securing grant funds from an external agency is an appropriate strategy for the organization to follow. Grant assistance should not be sought on a whim or because a nearby community or agency was successful in being funded. The best grant projects are those that are driven by a clear organizational awareness of how a particular grant program can be used most appropriately to address specific organizational needs and priorities.

Identify Your Grant Project

Once you have determined that pursuing a grant makes sense for your organization, the next step is to identify a need or issue that could be addressed through grant assistance. There are several ways to identify such projects:

- Utilize existing local, regional and state plans, studies and reports, particularly such documents as strategic development plans, comprehensive plans or community needs assessments.
- Hold brainstorming sessions with key stakeholders to generate project ideas that could be supported by grant funding.
- Think in terms of identifying definable, measurable community or agency issues and problems that could be addressed with grant assistance. A key question should be "what problem or situation in our community/agency could be improved or changed with grant assistance?"

After you have identified a possible project, draft a brief (two or three paragraphs) concept paper that can be used as a talking point when discussing your project with potential partners and funding organizations.

Match Your Project Idea to a Funding Source

The next step is to match your project idea with several possible sources of grant assistance, either public or private. It is important to remember that grant support can be found in many places. Federal agencies, state entities and foundations should be considered as potential sources of funding. These organizations provide billions of dollars each year in grants to organizations

throughout the U.S. Seek information on the Internet about federal, state, local and foundation grant opportunities. You can also contact your regional planning commission, regional USDA office or seek information from local colleges/universities to learn about potential grants.

Contact Grant-Making Agencies

It is very important to contact grant-making agencies as early as possible in the preparation process to establish a collaborative relationship between your organization and the funding source. Funding agencies usually list a contact person -- called a program officer -- who manages the grant program.

Arrange to meet this person, in person if possible (or by a phone call, virtual meeting, etc.) and establish a relationship with him/her. Program officers are subject matter experts for a specific program area and they have a wealth of knowledge about the grant program they represent. Your goal is to learn all that you can about the grant program your organization is considering, including any unwritten tips or subtle features about the program that agency staff may be aware of but are not found in the RFP (request for proposal).

Lastly, contact multiple funding agencies and sources. No grant program is guaranteed forever. Federal programs depend on Congressional appropriations and foundations can end their grant support for a number of reasons (change in mission, change in leadership, economic issues, etc.).

MOTIVATIONAL MOMENT ©

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." - - - Thomas Edison

Thomas Edison was a great inventor and businessman. Edison developed many devices that greatly influenced the world. Holding nearly 1,100 U.S. patents, Edison is best known for the light bulb, but he also invented a mechanical vote recorder, a battery for an electric car and a motion picture camera.

As an inventor, Edison conducted many experiments before he actually got it right. He stated that he didn't fail, he just found 10,000 ways that something won't work. In spite of the thousands of failed experiments and setbacks, he continued on. He tried one more time and that made all the difference.

What about you? Are you working on something and it's not going as expected? Are you training a new staff member and it seems like he/she is just not getting it? What about a friendship or a professional relationship that's not working? Maybe you have an idea that you would like to pursue, but you are not getting the support you need. Or there is a problem in your community that you are persistently working on, but can't get the proper assistance from local leaders. If this is you, don't quit. Change your message or your tactics, but don't quit.

Continue to pursue your goals. Continue to pursue your dreams. Continue to help your community. Don't give up. Try again. Then try one more time. Edison did and you should too. You will eventually be successful. Yes you will. And if I still have not convinced you yet, simply go home and turn on a lamp. **I think you will start to see the light!**

Arturo S. Menefee, Ph. D.

These are thoughts of Dr. Arturo Menefee - not the thoughts of ACLN or UACED. This is copyrighted material and may not be reproduced without the author's consent.

Thank you for helping the ACLN chart our way to building sustainable leadership programs.

Sincerely,

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On behalf of The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development