

In the News...

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With the new year now almost a month old, the Christmas decorations and New Year's resolutions have all been put away where they belong. Now is the time to pass your referrals for next year's class to our Selection Chair, Kristy Caldwell, as noted on page 5 of this issue. Kristy has been planning for several months and she and her committee are eager to see the referrals and applications of our next batch of future community leaders.

SESSION FIVE GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS



MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR...

February 4th and 11th — Goodnight Ambassadors Leadership and Ethics Workshops

February 9th — Session Six — Economic Development

February 16th — Board of Directors Regular Meeting

March 8th — Session Seven — Governmental Services

March 22nd — Board of Directors Regular Meeting

April 12th — Session Eight — To Be Determined

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Business and Industry were the topics covered by Session Five earlier this month as the Class of 2012 spent the day at TXI, who, in addition to providing a venue for the day, also provided lunch. The day was highlighted by a tour of the facility and an early afternoon panel of industry representatives who discussed in depth the connections

between local education, workforce development, and the factors that attract industry to a community. We want to thank TXI for their generous support of our program, and for hosting this month's session.

A last minute cancellation of a scheduled tour provided an unexpected opportunity for the class to work on the project presentation they will make at the January Board of Directors meeting. The class took full advantage of the extra time.

Why Leadership is Like Spinning Plates

The Story

Frequently on the Ed Sullivan show, he would have as one of his acts a "plate spinner."

The plate spinner would have a number of long, thin wooden rods sticking straight up, all in a row. Starting at one end of the row, he would put a plate on top of the wooden rod and start spinning it until it was going fast enough to not fall off of the rod. Then he would move on to the next rod and get another plate spinning. He would continue this down the entire row of wooden rods.

Soon, the plates he began spinning earlier would slow down, start to wobble and almost fall off the wooden rod. The plate spinner would have to stop what he was doing and go back and very quickly get that plate spinning again. Eventually there would be so many spinning plates that the plate spinner would be frantically running from rod to rod trying to keep them all going.

Eventually, he would not be able to keep up with them all, and plates would start to fall and break. As a young boy, seeing someone breaking plates on TV seemed like fun.

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THE 2011-2012 LSM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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* Non-voting ad hoc chair position

KEEP THEM SPINNING

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The Analogy

In the business world, leaders are confronted with a great number of tasks and responsibilities. Often times, it can feel like being one of those plate spinners. You are frantically moving from crisis to crisis just trying to keep things from breaking. There appears to be no time for quiet reflection or strategic concerns. All the effort is used just to keep the plates spinning.

It doesn't need to be that way. In this blog we will look at how to stop being a plate spinner and how to become a more effective long-term leader. Plates were originally made to hold scrumptious meals. Let's stop spinning plates and use them to feast on the fruits of successful planning.

The Principle

There was no single way to be an effective leader, but rather several. The common principle of success is "leveraged focus." The successful leader would not try to spin all of the plates by his/her self. Instead the leader would focus on only one of the plates. However, the leader would focus in such a way that the plate he was spinning would have an indirect impact on all of the other plates. His spinning of the one plate would leverage all of the other plates to keep them spinning without a need for the leader to focus on all of them.

1. Focus on People
2. Focus on Investment
3. Focus on Vision
4. Focus on Process

1) Focus on People

This type of effective leader would focus on making sure that the right people were in the right part of the organization, pretty much to the exclusion of most other factors. This leader would get very involved in the hiring process, making sure to be part of the interviewing. This leader would spend a great deal of time making sure the skills of people matched their responsibilities and that there was a cultural fit.

The leverage works as follows: If you get great people properly aligned in the organization to take advantage of their strengths, and give them the right tools, they can do great things. In other words, if the "people focus" plate is spinning well, it will create an environment where great people on their own will find the right plates and spin them for you. Just get the right people in the right place and then get out of their way. By focusing on one plate, you get them all.

Dick Schulze, the founder of Best Buy is probably a good example of this type of leadership. He was always fond of saying "you win with people."

2) Focus on Investment

This second type of effective leader would focus on making sure that the company was putting the resources behind the right projects. He or she would spend a lot of time focusing on capital investments—where and how the money is being spent. Returns on investment would be a key point of interest.

The leverage works as follows: If you can effectively control where the resources are placed in an organization, then you can effectively control what the organization does. In other words, you focus on determining which plates are the best ones to spin. Then you put enough resources behind those plates to ensure that they will keep on spinning without a need to constantly monitor them. The resources will get the work done, so you don't need to be everywhere at once trying to spin the plates yourself.

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Keep Them Spinning

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3) Focus on Vision

This third type of effective leader spends a significant amount of his or her time on making sure the vision and mission is right. Then this type of leader spends most of the remaining time communicating the vision, to make sure that everybody understands it and is behind it.

The leverage works as follows: If you can get everyone focused in moving in the same direction, then you will end up moving the company in that direction. The details about which particular plates should be spun would occur naturally as people gravitate to the plates most in line with the vision and start spinning them. By focusing only on the direction, you can get all the proper action from others as a natural consequence.

4) Focus on Process

A lot of the failure in business comes from poor execution. Therefore, this fourth type of effective leader focuses a great deal of time on process—examining how things get done in the organization. This type of leader looks for ways to streamline a process, eliminate bottlenecks, and make handoffs more seamless. Process flow charts consume the interest of this leader.

The leverage works as follows: By focusing on the Process Plate, one is creating an environment where it is harder for things to fail. Therefore, one does not have to keep running from wobbly crisis plate to wobbly crisis plate, because the efficiencies of the process tend to make the plates keep spinning longer all on their own.

The point of all this is that leaders cannot do it all themselves. However, they still need to make sure that all the proper plates are spinning. So rather than be half-hearted at everything, pick a plate to really focus on. And then make sure that you leverage that effort so that the impact of that plate indirectly gets all the other proper plates to spin on their own. This then allows the leaders the freedom to be true leaders, rather than just frantic plate spinners.

Summary

Even though a lot of things have to go right in order for a business to be successful, that does not mean that leaders need to spend time on every little thing that has to go right. In fact, if a leader gets spread that thin, they will end up being effective at nothing. Instead, leaders need to focus more narrowly to ensure that one particular aspect gets done supremely well, be it the people factor, the process factor, the resource factor or the vision factor. Then, the trick is to make sure the effectiveness in that one area ripples out to all the other areas, so that the consequence of the narrow focus causes everything else to naturally fall in line and get done without the need for constant leader attention.

Final Thoughts

If the balancing act you face each day sometimes seems impossible, think about David Spathaky. In 1996 he spun 108 plates simultaneously – a record that still stands today. Sometimes your challenges might seem just as overwhelming. David's secret was that he focused on just a single plate at a time.

Don't try to institute perfect all at once. Instead, focus on only one of these four areas at a time to get it right and then just rotate to the next focus.

The key is to stay calm and confident and always envision the next plate that needs to start spinning in order to keep momentum going.

ALUMNI UNDERWRITERS AND SPONSORS NEEDED AMBASSADORS LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP SUPPORT REQUESTED

The Class Project of the Class of 2010 was a two-session leadership and ethics workshop for the benefit of the Owen Goodnight Ambassadors. This campus organization is the creation of Principal Steve Dow and offers opportunities for community service and active participation in wider off-campus community activities to students who might not otherwise have those opportunities. The workshop last year was presented in three main parts, a keynote speaker, small group breakout discussions, and a low ropes challenge course presented by the Group Oriented Achievement and Learning Program of Texas State University.

This year the Board of Directors approved a repeat of that project, to take place February 4th and February 11th. Because the approval took place after annual budgets had been approved, there is a need for underwriting for the ropes exercises and meals for the Ambassadors. Though some funding has been made available, additional funding is still needed. Any Alumni interested in contributing to the workshop project or underwriting specific elements of the activities should contact Treasurer John Rodriguez at john.rodriguez@mccoys.com. All contributions will be deeply appreciated and recognized in these pages.

This year's Leadership and Ethics Workshop is a departure from past practice, as it is considered an Alumni Association project rather than a class project, and its continuation in future years will be dependent in part on the support available for this year's effort. The committee organizing the workshop includes LSM Alumni Dick Bump, Jerry Gracy, Jeremiah Pizana, Scott Gregson, and Rick Bell. Arlene Hooper is the campus sponsor of the Ambassadors. Keynote speakers for the two sessions will be Mayor Daniel Guerrero and Dr. Sandra Garcia.



SELECTION CHAIR ACCEPTING REFERRALS

Selection Chair Kristy Caldwell reminds us that it's time for all of us to be thinking about, and passing along, referrals for the Class of 2013. She is accepting referrals at this time, and all such recommendations and referrals will be appreciated. Kristy has already begun to assemble her Selection Committee and is looking forward to reviewing alumni leads for next year's class. Applications are available at <http://www.leadershipsanmarcos.com>, or you may contact any board member for information.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Greetings Alumni!

Happy New Year Leadership San Marcos! I hope that your New Year is off to a grand start!

Often a New Year prompts New Year Resolutions, and I read recently that perhaps instead of a resolution a theme word would be more effective and meaningful. A theme word that was offered up was **MESH**. I immediately thought how well the word **MESH** correlated to Leadership.

Mesh suggests new levels of collaboration where every voice is welcome.

Mesh promotes learning and sharing.

Mesh suggests a balance of opinion and thought.

Mesh proposes great community and those who share a passion.

Mesh brings an element of transparency. You can see through mesh. It is not about hidden process or decision.

Mesh might actually suggest a network that exists at the intersection of learning, sharing, collaboration, and problem solving. There could be millions of intersections in a mesh.

Mesh is a "we" not "me" approach to problem solving.

Mesh proposes action for the greater good.

This year, I will aspire to mesh and be meshed. I will try to be meshable. At the end of the year, I hope I can say, "I meshed up."

A common thread that I have heard from many and that I am experiencing myself is "my plate and or plates are full, and balancing it all is becoming more and more difficult". Our Leadership lesson in this month's newsletter provides great information on how to balance the many things that keep our plates spinning.

Individually we can't do it all, but collectively we can accomplish much.

The class sessions are going so well and the class feedback provides us the wonderful opportunity to improve, enhance and sustain future sessions. In addition they have been working hard on their class project and will provide their second report out at the January board meeting. Bonnie and Mitsie have shared the class is energized, engaged, focused and moving well through the project phases with great bouts of creative brainstorming. The class has journeyed well from being a group of strangers to becoming a united team with a common goal.

Please join me in taking a moment to pause and reflect on our Mission Statement:

The mission of **Leadership San Marcos** is to identify, inform, educate, and motivate individuals to participate in programs and activities that will improve the San Marcos community.

(Continued on page 7 at "Message from the President")

This Just In! Stop the Presses! Hold the Phone! Benton Recognized!

Those of us who have the pleasure to know her were not at all surprised to learn, as we go to press, that Mitsie Benton, Class of 2011, LSM Board Member, and Facilitator Vice-Chair Extraordinaire, has been recognized as the latest recipient of the Hays County Volunteer Civic Leader Award. Mitsie is the proprietor of Happy Paws Pet Services, and has long been one of the most productive and well known Ambassadors for the San Marcos Area Chamber of Commerce. Our warmest congratulations to Mitsie for this well deserved recognition by the community at large in a recent Daily Record poll.



LSM Scholarship Applications Now Being Accepted

Alumni Association Treasurer John Rodriguez reminds us that applications for the annual Leadership San Marcos Scholarship are available through our web site www.leadershipsanmarcos.com (Community Involvement/Scholarship links) and are being accepted from 2012 high school graduates who are children or grandchildren of LSM Alumni Association members. Relatively few applications have been received for this \$1000 scholarship in recent years, so we want to encourage Alumni with graduating children or grand-children to take advantage of the opportunity. More information is available at the website and questions may be addressed directly to John Rodriguez at john.rodriguez@mccoys.com.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

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We accomplish this by:

- ◇ Providing a continuing education program for our members in order to foster an awareness of current issues facing the community, and to inspire personal growth and ongoing training in leadership skills;
- ◇ Providing a means of networking to exchange ideas and introduce opportunities for community involvement for our members; and
- ◇ Establishing and maintaining our identity as a willing and capable pool of leadership talent, interested and ready to serve the community.

Our Mission Statement is clear and Leadership San Marcos had many positive affirmations in 2011 that will continue into 2012 but it will take focus, unity, engagement and yes meshing together well.

Thank you for the passion you have for Leadership San Marcos, and for striving and being a servant leader to San Marcos.

Sincerely,
Denise Collazo, Class of 2008
Board of Directors President 2011-2012

ALUMNI MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Leadership San Marcos provides face-to-face contact with peers from various organizations and industries in the community. Networking advantages through Leadership San Marcos include expanding your resources, keeping abreast of new developments, learning about other businesses and industries, and making new business contacts.

If you are not already an alumni member, please plan to send your dues in today! Membership only costs \$40 per year and we will gladly provide a receipt. Not only will your dues go towards promoting and enhancing the Leadership San Marcos program, your membership is a great way to stay involved in community events and be a part of great networking opportunities! Please contact any member of the board to pay your dues or send them to P.O. Box 1144, San Marcos, TX 78667-1144.



FEEDBACK WELCOME!

The Board of Directors welcomes your ideas and feedback so that we can continue to provide an invaluable experience for all members of Leadership San Marcos. We take your input very seriously and will strive to meet your needs as we develop class programs, enrichment lunches, and other activities that will not only capture your interest as alumni or class members, but also continue to spark the interest of future leaders in joining our distinguished group.

You may contact our Board President, Denise Collazo, via email at leadershipsm@grandecom.net, or any member of the Board of Directors, to offer your ideas, comments, or concerns. You are also always welcomed to send your thoughts and comments to the Board at P.O. Box 1144, San Marcos, TX 78667-1144.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR...

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April 19th — Board of Directors Regular Meeting

April 26th — Annual Alumni Meeting

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