



Leadership Tips & Tools

MARCH 2010

*"The first sparrow of spring! The year beginning with younger hope than ever . . .
The brooks sing carols and glees to the spring . . .
A single gentle rain makes the grass many shades greener.
So our prospects brighten on the influx of better thoughts."*

Henry David Thoreau

Learning and sharing in community! For me, that's the true essence of the Chair Academy. Just returned from the Academy's 19th Annual International Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota and the Advanced Leadership Academy that immediately preceded the conference. At home now, reflecting on lessons learned. Like the gentle rain nourishing the landscape, warm sun awakening creatures of spring and hope of abundance to come . . . things seem brighter.

A Bright Future for Post-Secondary Leadership

Profound Lessons! It is often a simple human story that captures our hearts and teaches us profound lessons. One such story is told by Jim Kouzes as he appears on *Between the Lines* to discuss the latest edition of his co-authored book with Barry Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*. As a part of the Advanced Academy journey we watched the following clip at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IM5HeehxHQQ>

A Heart Touching Story! Jim touches his heart and ours as he shares the story of Max DePree, CEO of Herman Miller and author of several bestselling books on leadership including his most recent, *Leadership Jazz*. Max's granddaughter, Zoe, now in her 20s and doing very well, was born prematurely and given only a 10% chance of survival. The concerned and loving grandfather wanted to be involved in the care of his granddaughter so he asked the nurse what he might do. The nurse suggested that the grandfather gently rub baby Zoe's hands, feet, and little body with the tip of his finger. As he did this, the nurse said, he was to tell his granddaughter how much he loved her because Zoe needed to connect her grandfather's voice with his touch. Nurse Ruth was giving the right advice for grandfather and granddaughter. And according to DePree, was giving him the best possible lesson for the work of a leader.

"To become a leader one must always connect one's voice to one's touch."

Max DePree

Beyond the Story! Max DePree has written many excellent books on leadership. A personal narrative, *Dear Zoe*, shares a grandfather's love on the miracle and wonder of life. In all his work, and in the work of his friend, Jim Kouzes, we see again and again the wisdom of connecting our voice with our touch. Jim reminds us that there is a prior step, however. We must find our voice as leaders, engage in deep soul searching, look back on our leadership journey to isolate the times when we were at our best, and discover how we can bring more of that excellence to our leadership. This appreciative, strengths based lens of Kouzes and Posner and their research at the Center for Creative Leadership displays wonderful insights for all of us who serve in post-secondary education.

*"The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.
The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant. "*

Max DePree

What is Your Story? Abundant challenges face us in post-secondary education: funding, over-extension of limited human resources, retention, social and economic need, lost souls looking for a chance, dreams to be made, futures in which to invest. How will we as post-secondary leaders respond? "*Challenges introduce us to ourselves*," Jim Kouzes says. Can we connect our voice to our touch during these times of adversity and crisis? Are these trying and challenging times our collective crucible? Is this a test of our true north principles in post-secondary education?

Connected! Bill George connects his voice with his touch! Bill is the legendary CEO of Medtronic, author of bestselling books on leadership: *Authentic Leadership*, *True North*, and *7 Lessons for Leading in Crisis*, and one of our colleagues in post-secondary education. Impressive credentials for sure! Most remarkably, Bill is a teacher! He shared his voice and touch with us at the conference and taught us much.

Storyteller! Not the ordinary keynote, Bill shared stories to teach his lessons. He told of finding authentic self, living true north principles, maintaining personal wellness – all personal work of leaders. He taught us how to become a trusted leader by connecting to organizational mission and vision, recognizing the importance of spirit and ceremony at work, serving and leading within and across the organization, facing challenges, finding opportunities. Throughout he reminded us why we came to leadership and celebrated belief in the talent and promise of our students whether at Harvard or on our own campuses.

Wisdom in the Stories! In *7 Lessons for Leading in Crisis*, Bill teaches us important lessons: "When you're in a hole, stop digging." "Don't be Atlas, turn to your team." "Connect through your vulnerability." "Slow down, think, who are you, really?" "Get ready for the long haul." "Never let a good crisis go to waste." "Hold truth and trust in the spotlight." "Create a culture of candor and honesty."

The Lessons! If we are to successfully lead in crisis in post-secondary education we need to face reality, starting with ourselves. What is our true north as individuals? Is it aligned with our college mission and vision? Do we keep our personal and organizational values foremost in our mind each day as we face our challenges? Can each member of our team articulate and enact our organizational mission, vision, and values? If we can't, how can we connect to it and serve each other and our students? If we can't, have we become a collection of independent contractors acting on behalf of ourselves first and our college and students second?

Looking for Meaning! We are all looking for meaning in our lives. Does our work provide meaning? As leaders are we helping those we serve connect to the mission and vision of our colleges to find meaning in their work? Do our colleagues and students say, “I am part of something special”? How can answers to all of these questions sustain us, ennoble our efforts on behalf of students, and empower us to make a difference in the lives of our students and communities through our work as leaders in post-secondary education? Look to *7 Lessons for Leading in Crisis* by Bill George for insight.

Our Life’s Story! Passion to lead comes from our life’s story. The essence of our connections with others must come from our authenticity and by living our true north values and principles.

“Our job is NOT to have power, it is to empower other people”

Bill George

Connect with Others! On a beautiful spring-like Sunday afternoon in Minneapolis, Rodd Wagner, bestselling co-author of *12 The Elements of Great Managing*, came for a visit. Rodd stopped by the Advanced Leadership Academy to discuss his new book, *The Power of 2*, co-authored with his mentor Gale Muller. With great data, massive research, and a gift for storytelling, Rodd extended our lessons on connecting. He moved us from connecting our voice to our touch to connecting in partnerships.

Oxygen and Acetylene! My favorite story in *The Power of 2* is the one of Rodd’s junior high shop teacher who wanted to impress upon his young students the dangers of the oxyacetylene torch. The teacher chose drama! He knew his audience! First he filled a balloon with oxygen. Lit a match under it. “Pop.” Teacher has students’ attention! Another balloon is filled with acetylene. Lighting a match under this balloon produced a short flare as the fuel caught fire. (Not sure we could do this science experiment in our classes today, nonetheless, this teacher was on a roll!) “He repeated the procedure a third time, opening the valves for both the oxygen and the acetylene . . . BAM! . . . The mixture exploded with such force, the students could hear it loudly through their plugged ears . . . Point made!”

Memorable Lesson! Was the explosion the effect of the oxygen? Or the acetylene? Both! “Separately, they are impressive. Together, they create a mixture so hot it can melt steel. The power is in the combination. Your partnerships work on this same principle.” If the first lesson of a leader is to connect our voice with our touch, is the second lesson to connect in partnerships that create something extraordinary that we could never do alone? Read the whole story in *The Power of 2!*

What it Takes! Joan McArthur-Blair provided inspiration for all of us who have dedicated our lives to our colleges, communities, and students as the closing speaker at the Chair Academy’s 19th Annual International Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. During her keynote Joan helped us understand what it takes to be a leader in today’s post-secondary environment. A gifted storyteller, Joan told stories of her work and colleagues at Nova Scotia Community College. She also spoke of the profound lessons she learned about leadership from her parents’ example.

Role Models in Leadership! Joan’s parents taught her the promise of Hope in striving to live one’s best life. They taught lessons on grace and resilience during times of Despair. They taught of Forgiveness for others and perhaps the hardest lesson of all - to forgive ourselves. Joan’s parents taught their daughter lessons in leadership each day much as Nurse Ruth taught Max DePree.

Powerful Teachers! I am mindful that each of us has powerful teachers in our lives. Sometimes lessons come from thoughtful and kind authors and keynote speakers like Bill George who invites us into his world of authenticity by connecting his voice with his touch. Sometimes the lesson comes from researchers and authors who translate volumes of data so it becomes powerful, practical, and useful each day of our lives like Rodd Wagner & Gale Muller. Sometimes it is a speaker like Joan McArthur-Blair who speaks with wisdom and from her heart as she reminds us what is essential in our daily work as post-secondary leaders as she connects the lessons from her childhood to her exemplary leadership today.

Everyone Has a Story! As a small child barely old enough to write or spell correctly, I colored a picture and scribbled a love note to my grandmother. 'To 'Grannie,' I wrote. That was it! For all the grandchildren and great grandchildren to come, "Grannie" it was! She was my Oxygen in so many ways. "Grannie" taught me many of life's most important lessons. I remember one . . .

Sacrifice and Joy! It was the 1960s, I was in college and every Friday I would receive a handwritten note from "Grannie." News of the week at home, queries about my studies, and 2 crisp one-dollar bills (may not seem like much today, but on a modest social security income almost 40 years ago . . . this was a generous gift). Always the same closing note, "*One for you, one for me . . . spend them in joy for both of us!*" \$2! Whether used for the Saturday matinee, ice cream with a friend, or a little extra for the collection plate on Sunday morning . . . sacrifice, generosity, kindness and joy . . . my grandmother's lessons. I may have missed the significance then, but I get it now! Rodd and Gale reminded me in the *Power of 2*. Grannie and me! Two crisp \$2 bills.

Who is Your Oxygen? What is your story of the *Power of 2*? How can you use it to transform the lives of your colleagues and students? As you think of Zoe and Max DePree, how will you connect your voice and your touch? As you face the challenges before us in post-secondary leadership how might you use the 7 *Lessons for Leading in Crisis* and be authentic and follow your *True North*? As you connect your voice and your touch, face challenges with true and authentic leadership, who will go with you on the journey maximizing efforts through the *Power of 2*?

Hope springs, brooks sing, and our important and challenging work awaits. May "*our prospects brighten on the influx of better thoughts.*"

We want to hear from you! We would love to hear your suggestions, experiences, stories, discoveries, and successes with putting these tips and tools to work. What topics would be most helpful to you for up-coming issues of *Leadership Tips and Tools*? We value your feedback. We are listening!

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