



Leading the Journey

An E-newsletter on EXCELLENCE in Leadership

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Walk, Don't Sit

Cyril Connelly

MBWA, Management By Walking Around, is not a new strategy. Jack Welch, a former CEO of General Electric, used this idea to the benefit of GE in the seventies. Then, in the late nineties, executives for Hewlett Packet also used this strategy to help in its leadership.

We have all heard that the role of a principal is “difficult and demanding” and that can be an accurate reflection on campus life. Challenging situations are very real to every principal as he or she faces the daily workload of our schools. MBWA is a practical approach that can assist us in our campus leadership.

MBWA simply means staying in direct touch with your workplace constituents. It includes wandering the hallways, visiting classes, attending as many school activities as possible, attending home and school meetings, having lunch with your teachers, dropping in for brief class observations, and the list goes on. In short, it is being involved in the activities that help keep us in touch with the climate of our schools and offers the benefit of helping us to be more effective leaders.

MBWA is intentional; it means getting out from behind our desks and pushing away some of that pesky paperwork. It encourages a leader to stay in close touch with his or her team. I found it easy to sit at my desk. There was always “stuff” to do, whether paper shuffling or planning programs and meetings.

I can share many examples of how intentional wandering helped me stay in touch. One memorable day I stopped by a classroom after school. A teacher was sitting in at a desk, obviously distraught and sobbing. The teacher had just received devastating news, and I just happened to be there when I was needed. We talked and prayed together, forging a personal bond that enhanced our professional relationship.

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Policy, Process and People

Robert Skoretz

My first year as a school administrator felt, at times, like I was the fellow at the circus juggling knives, except without the many hours of practice! As difficult situations came slicing my way, I tried my best to handle them without letting people down or inadvertently hurting anyone or myself. I quickly learned that developing good policy and observing careful process are essential to working effectively with people in a school community.

As I prepared to address my first serious student discipline issue, I was tempted to wade right in and mete out justice! However, in my ignorance or in my wisdom, I chose to seek counsel. I learned from those wiser than I that private school discipline ought to be based on written policy and should proceed fairly and reasonably. In the emotional crucible of that first discipline situation, the fact that I adhered carefully to policy and moved slowly and deliberately with each step brought an overall sense of balance and integrity.

Observing careful process also allows for evaluation and positive change. In a different challenging discipline situation, after following policy and process, it became obvious that I needed to change a policy for the sake of our students and school community. The outcomes of good policies ought to create the very best possible environment for students and families to grow. I have found it easier to write or revise more effective policies after following careful and thorough process.

Policy and process are at their best when they help people. In this regard, policy will always reach its functional limit. However, appropriate exceptions to policy cannot be made without careful process. In order to be fair and reasonable, good exceptions require the framework of good policy and the careful steps of good process. In our schools, people do come first! And good policy and good process help protect all the people in our community as we juggle the wonderful and challenging responsibilities of Christian education. ☪

Walk, Don't Sit

On another occasion while wandering the campus, I encountered a student who was intent on ditching school for the rest of the day. I engaged the student in conversation and learned that he was having problems. I was able to provide a sounding board for his frustrations. If I had not been at that spot at that moment, I would have had no knowledge of this student's difficulty and intention.

Sadly, our age of computers and technology often misses the personal touch. If MBWA is used in an open and non-manipulative manner, it can provide an important hands-on tool for your campus leadership. It can demonstrate your administration's visibility on campus and willingness to be sensitive to the ideas and needs of faculty and students. Then, as leader, you will be better able to find appropriate changes since you have assessed first-hand the needs of your students and staff. ☸

"Leadership begins with you and your belief in yourself. Leadership continues only if other people also believe in you."

Barry Posner

"It is not only what a vision is, but what a vision does."

Peter Senge

What We're Reading

Ed Boyatt

Educators are motivational experts. So we think. Since you completed your Educational Psychology course in your teacher preparation program, when is the last time you seriously studied motivation? I recommend Daniel Pink's book "Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us."

William Glasser and Jim Roy remind us that that intrinsic motivation wins over extrinsic in the long run. Reliance on external rewards actually brings more harm than good. We talk about the joy of life-long learning and inquisitive learning, but our grading systems still determines the reward or punishment.

Pink has a gift of turning technical research studies into readable evidence that encourages us to think and hopefully inspire us to act. Pink believes it is in our nature to seek purpose, to do something that truly matters, doing it well and serving a cause that improves the human condition.

Pink's new motivational model includes three essential elements:

1. Autonomy – "the desire to direct our own lives."
2. Mastery – "the urge to get better and better at something that matters."
3. Purpose – "the yearning to do what we do in service of something larger than ourselves."

Pink will help us be leaders in motivating our teachers and students with intrinsic rewards. Adventist education will become the model schools that others will visit and learn how to truly motivate ourselves to live and learn. ☸

Boardsmanship

Berit von Pohle

In previous issues, we've discussed the role of the school board. So far, we have examined three primary functions in which each board must participate:

- What—in collaboration with administration, the board determines the mission of the school. Who does the school exist to serve? What are the goals in serving the students?
- How—once the mission has been determined, the board (again in collaboration with administration), establishes how the mission will be accomplished. How will the board function? What areas of the school program need improvement? How will these improvements be implemented?
- How Well—the board and administration regularly evaluate various aspects of the school program. The board holds administration accountable for regular personnel evaluations. The board establishes measures of accountability for areas such as finance in order to determine if goals are being met.

We now come to the fourth function of the school board—to **sell** (or promote) the school. This function is often completed by board members individually. How can this be accomplished?

- School board members have the privilege (and responsibility) to report to the church they represent through regular church board meetings. Or perhaps the board member requests a few minutes to speak on Sabbath morning during a ministry focus on a particular aspect of the school program. (This is far more effective when it includes a student testimonial).
- School board members recognize they are "trustees", holding the school in trust for future generations. Regularly sharing the good things, and leaving out the normal tensions that exist within a board, will go far in leaving people with positive feelings about the school.
- School board members actively seek out potential students for the school. These may be children who attend church, but not the church school. Maybe these potential students come from the community. In any case, board members work as a liaison between the potential student (and family) and the school.

School boards have four basic functions as they work for the betterment of the school: what, how, how well, and to sell. ☸

Join the Journey

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