

Get The Lead Out

Bill Conley, CFM

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It's that time of year again where it may be wise to take a second and reflect on what we want to do when we grow up. The scope could be as broad as life in general, to the more specific realities of our jobs, to the ancillary activities of the organizations that we belong to. Regardless, though, of the focus of our thoughts, there are parallels in all the different aspects of our lives...how we conduct ourselves and what we want to accomplish...that necessitate similar approaches.

In July, a new Chapter year starts, with a need for new leaders to step up and be counted (upon). It's a safe assumption to state that we all want to further ourselves. Be it in our career or just in personal development. In the IFMA Organization, there are plenty of opportunities to do both, as well as meet some pretty nice people. As an Associate Member, sales leads and contacts are possible through the build up of personal relationships. Professional members benefit from best practices, contacts, and networking. All our members can learn from our educational programs, and, more importantly, from each other. IFMA may be our common denominator, but we all have different areas of expertise and sources of information that can be shared to the betterment of all.

Everything we do in life should be treated as a learning experience. Every action we take, every decision we make, sets precedents and parameters for future plans and resolutions. In that respect, IFMA offers more than trading professional tips and educating ourselves within the specific genre that is Facility Management. Belonging to and participating in the organization offers us life-learning experiences- opportunities to use (and hone) skills that we may not be able to develop in our work lives. For instance, we can develop our social skills as we inter-act with professionals that have no hidden agenda and can talk about common problems, events and trends. We have the capability of learning speaking skills by addressing friendly audiences who understand and are interested in what we have to say. And, we can utilize IFMA as a training ground to become leaders in our own right. If we want to excel in the business world, these are three habits that we should acquire, and our venue is rife with possibilities to do just that.

The caveat to this, of course, is that we all have to get involved. Whether this participation exists only on the program level...attendance at our functions...on the committee level...or as a chairperson. If we don't take part, we will miss chances to succeed and/or improve in our profession.

LEAD ON

The call for leaders never dies. Whether the role is that of a mentor, advisor, manager or coordinator there are always needs for someone to take the first initiative. Being a leader is one of the ultimate tests of whether or not we have processed and know how to use knowledge wisely. It is a derivation of quality thoughts and actions. Effective leadership is a demonstration that knowledge is more than the possession of facts and data (remember the old equation, information < knowledge < wisdom?). Being cognizant of terms and philosophies does not mean we know how to implement them. The step to being a leader indicates our ability to transfer data into proper actions.

We also need to understand values and convictions. We need to identify with what compels others and tap into those needs. After all, people are attracted to those whose values are similar to their own. We will need to organize and respond to the demands of our membership that reflect both their intrinsic and extrinsic needs.

BUILD A LEAD

Leadership is an acquired and earned role. It calls for people who have reached a level of confidence that brings a willingness to be assertive and to be bold. Instinctual fortitude and the ability to accept risk are essential. It requires a mindset that recognizes the Golden Rule and holds a touch of empathy. It takes a person who has sampled many moccasins (for many miles!). It takes understanding, flexibility and imagination. We must know how to develop a thorough and efficient utilization of all our resources, while being able to continually choose between innovation and continuity. These seem to be the attributes we need to work in Facilities! Assuming a leadership role in IFMA can either affirm our practices at work, or help us fine-tune them.

It also requires the development of relationships. The deeper the relationships, the stronger potential for consensus and trust. If we build enough of the right kind of connections with the right kind of people, we can dramatically improve our effectiveness. This, too, will serve us well in the workplace; not only as a practice, but as a carryover of like-minded professionals that can be called upon to assist and support us in our assigned tasks.

Finally, we will find that as we assume the responsibility of being a participant, a contributor and a positive influence in our professional lives, our personal lives will improve. We will want to get more involved in the community. We will be able to make better and smarter decisions. It will help us to be more understanding and less judgmental. It may just make us better people. And that's a good thing, no?

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If we assume a leadership role, it will be readily apparent how successful we are...all we have to do is look behind us to see if anyone is following! But, as Facility Professionals, we already are looked up to as leaders in our workplace. What IFMA can do is help us work out the kinks and build the type of confidence needed to truly guide people in the right direction.

We can all be leaders. Even if we are not in an elected position or a chairperson of some committee. Leading by example, supporting chosen officials, or working to the benefit of our membership and the community are all signs of a leader. Leading is influencing, nothing else. We can all ensure quality and success by showing others that that is our will. If we project a positive image and enthusiasm in whatever we do, others will emulate us. And then others will emulate them. And so on. And so on.

To paraphrase a quote from the Great Bard, some people are born to leadership, some people aspire to it, some people have it thrust upon them. In this organization, all of us are touched by one aspect of this precept or another. The challenge is whether we grasp the role and run with it, or not.

As the new 'Chapter Year' approaches and the dance takes another turn around the ballroom, we'll all be asked to step onto the floor. Who wants to lead?