

NEW HEIGHTS

Southern Region Middle Managers Newsletter

March 2016



Looking Beyond Today



**Doug Steele, Director Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Administrative Liaison to
Southern Region Middle Managers**

I hope this edition of the newsletter finds you with melting snow, warmer weather and the promise of spring just around the corner. It is my pleasure to work closely with Middle Managers to provide leadership to the most important group of employees in our organization: our

employees. I often discuss the 3 P's that make Extension an incredible institution of educational outreach and change: People (both internal and external), programs and partnerships. Middle managers face many complex issues as part of their daily demands for attention. It is easy to get caught up in the "management" and forget about the "leadership" necessary to ensure continued success and relevancy. We spend time analyzing the characteristics of good leadership, but what happens when we exhibit the characteristics of poor leadership? I was recently sent an article from Forbes magazine that made me begin to realize the effects of poor leadership and the implications for employee morale. (See Leadership Corner on pg. 6)

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Evaluating & Rewarding Extension Agent Performance



**Dr. Jeff Young, Director of County Operations
University of Kentucky; Cooperative Extension Service**

Despite best intentions, the performance review process remains an annual exercise in futility on the part of many employees and the managers, directors and supervisors who are guiding the process. According to Roberts and Pregitzer (2007), employees dread the performance appraisal process because of six factors:

1. Rating bias
2. Appraisal hypocrisy
3. Poor informal feedback
4. Poor communication during the formal feedback session
5. Rater errors
6. Rater appraisal – self appraisal mismatch

These factors run counter to the very foundation of performance rating. That being to:

1. Provide clear expectations
2. Improve performance
3. Reduce frustration and discouragement

To address these concerns, Kentucky Cooperative Extension has taken steps to make the annual performance evaluation (PE) more “objective” by measuring review scores on employee accomplishments in each of the following 7 major job responsibilities (MJR):

1. Educational Programming – 35%
2. Advisory Councils – 15%
3. Leadership – 10%
4. Public Accountability and Public Relations – 15%
5. Facilitation/ Collaboration / Teamwork – 15%
6. Customer Service – 5%
7. Supervision – 5%

The PE process begins with a “self-evaluation” where the agents rates themselves on each of the 7 MJR, based on a 4 point Likert Scale. Next, the director supervisor rates the agents in consultation with program area leaders/directors, and the process is finalized with a face to face feedback time. In order to help ensure consistency both agent and supervisor use the “Agent Evaluation Rubric”, which gives examples of behaviors and accomplishments related to each score.

While not perfect we feel that the objective analysis of agent accomplishments does address many of the perceived fears associated with the annual performance review process.

If you would like more information please contact Jeff Young, University of Kentucky CES
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If Nothing is Impossible for Little Girls, Why Can't MMs Do it ALL?

Hearing about the winter storms and bad weather in much of the country, a little girl from the warm region asks: "Daddy, why don't we have snow here?" "Because it does not snow down here, Honey". "Hummm, she thinks, if we have no snow, can we build a snow man out of plants and branches?"



Asheville, North Carolina

A Word from North Carolina: 2017 MM Conference Host



Barbara Board, NC A&T and Sheri Schwab, NC State Univ.

Planning has started for the Spring 2017 Middle Managers Conference! North Carolina is excited to host this bi-annual event. We are planning for the beautiful Asheville, NC, area in March or April 2017. The conference will include (1) workshops and (2) professional development tours.



We will soon be doing a call for proposals for workshop topics, so put your thinking caps on as to what "hot topics" you are facing as MMs so that we can bring the very best information to our group. The 2015 MM conference had no specific theme, and workshops were kept as general (versus breakout) sessions. This received very high marks from participants, so we plan to replicate this format.

We are also working to schedule professional tours of our Mountain Horticulture Research and Extension Center, which is located adjacent to the brand-new Sierra Nevada brewing company; as well as a potential tour of the Biltmore Estate farm/dairy and vineyard, where NC Cooperative Extension has worked with the Biltmore farm on projects from weed, erosion and pest control to other agriculture production methods, and a potential tour of the NC Arboretum.

Asheville is served by two major airports; Charlotte (2-hour drive; US Air hub) and Atlanta (3 hours 20 minute drive; Delta hub). However, we think it will be worth the extra travel.

If anyone is interested in serving on the planning committee, please contact Sheri Schwab, sheri_schwab@ncsu.edu, or Barbara Board, baboard@ncat.edu.



Many Hats of Middle Managers

Tips for the First Year MMs



Dr. Joe Schaeffer, South District Extension Director; Univ. of Florida
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Being an Extension District Director, or middle manager, has often been described as the most difficult job in the organization. For example, Extension middle managers are often charged with supervising a large number of employees with diverse personalities that are dispersed over a broad geographic region. Extension middle

managers maintain partnerships with numerous local government entities, and work to maintain positive stakeholder relationships as well. Managing complex, cyclical budgets are part of the job, as is hiring, training, and evaluating employees. These challenges and opportunities require middle managers to be strong yet compassionate leaders, motivators, facilitators, and negotiators, among many other talents.

The Middle Management Committee of the Southern Region Program Leadership Network, <http://srpln.msstate.edu/pln/mm.html>, has been an essential resource for developing and honing best practices for new middle managers. Early involvement in this committee is extremely helpful to orient beginning MMs as they embark on their new adventures in this challenging, but very rewarding role.

The MM Committee is comprised of middle managers from 1862 and 1890 land grant institutions in 13 southern states, and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. They meet once every early fall as part of the SPLN meeting to develop an annual plan of work and

discuss issues, and share experiences and information. They often jointly meet with another committee such as Program and Staff Development and IT to discuss common interests and collaborate on projects useful to multiple committees. The MMs also meet every other spring for professional development training. The MM Committee products, and sharing and discussions with members provide MMs with excellent tools that help guide us on our journeys through this ever-changing maze of responsibilities.

For example, here are two references that I have found to be very useful:

Falcone, Paul. 2009. 101 Tough Conversations to Have with Employees: A Managers Guide to Addressing Performance, Conduct, and Discipline Challenges. AMACOM, American Management Association. New York, NY. 304 pp.

Deblieux, Mike. 1995. Documenting Discipline. American Media Inc. Des Moines, IA. 86 pp.



Trust: A Competitive Edge and Skill that Needs to be Built



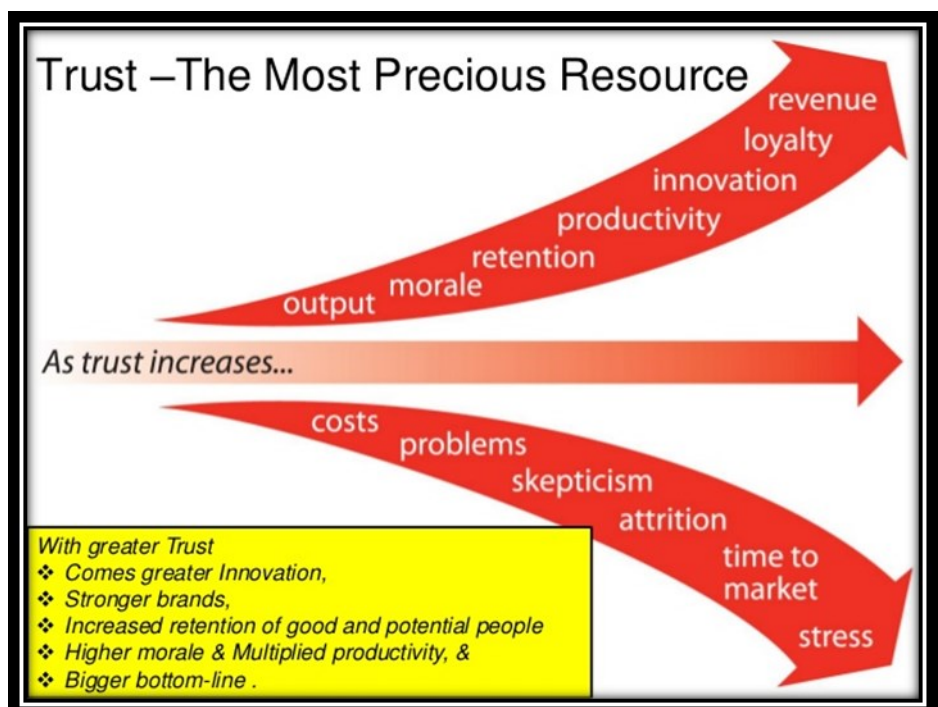
Matt Benge, Extension Assistant Professor, UF/IFAS Dept. of Agricultural Education & Communication; mattbenge@ufl.edu

Trust is perhaps one of the most important elements in the workplace, yet it is often overlooked. Horsager (2011) argues trust is the key difference to gaining a competitive edge, building better relationships within the workplace and with clientele, and fostering long-term growth. Quite a bit of literature exists within the Extension field regarding trust and its impact on employee job satisfaction, workplace relationships and teams, employee retention, and organizational effectiveness (Branham, 2005; Franz, 2004; Kang & Stewart, 2007). The below model depicts organizational success as trust increases. However, if you were to reverse the model, a decrease in trust leads to several key organizational deficiencies.

In order to develop and build trust within the Extension system, a needs assessment should be conducted to gauge the current level of trust that exists. Butler (1991) developed the Conditions of Trust Inventory (CTI) which measures multiple conditions which factor into the development of a trust relationship. The CTI is rooted in organizational behavior and seeks to identify the necessary conditions to build trust rather than explain trust as a single construct. The CTI consists of ten different constructs, with an additional overall trust construct: availability, competence, consistency, discreetness, fairness, integrity, loyalty, openness, promise fulfillment, and receptivity.

Several resources are available to Extension Middle Managers to develop and build trust within Extension professionals. Below is bulleted list of various resources for your use:

- Sinek, S. (2015). *How do you get your colleagues to trust you?* Available at <http://www.npr.org/2015/05/15/406453811/how-do-you-get-your-colleagues-to-trust-you>
- Horsager, D. (2011). *The trust edge: How top leaders gain faster results, deeper relationships, and a stronger bottom line*. Minneapolis, MN: Summerside Press.
- Butler, J. K. Jr. (1991). Towards understanding and measuring conditions of trust: Evolution of a conditions of trust inventory. *Journal of Management*, 17(3), 643-663.
- Lombardo, M. M., & Eichinger, R. W. (2009). *FYI for your improvement: A guide for development and coaching* (5th ed.). Minneapolis, MN: Korn/Ferry International.



New Heights: Helping Middle Managers Rise to the Top

The MM Newsletter seeks to make us become better MM by (1) serving as the repository for presentations and discussions during our annual meetings, (2) providing communication about current and future events of interest to us, (3) making us know each other better, and (4) encouraging our own professional development.

Vote on a group logo by sending an email to Dr. Eric Simonne at esimonne@ufl.edu by April 1, 2016.

Leadership Development Corner

7 Mistakes Leaders Make That Make Everyone Miserable
Adapted from Travis Bradberry
(Return on Character by Dr. Fred Kiel)

1. Fostering a Cult of Personality: being caught up in your own world of leadership and forgetting the people you serve.
2. Dodging accountability: the best leaders take the blame but share the credit.
3. Lacking Self-Awareness: understand yourself and your organization.
4. Forgetting that Communication is a Two-Way Street: move beyond listening and really "hear" what is being said.
5. Not Firing Poor Performers: leaders owe it to the employees and organization to not retain people who clearly are not contributing to the mission success.
6. Succumbing to the Tyranny of the Urgent: putting out small fires instead of addressing the raging fire that can consume your organization.
7. Micromanaging: you must make the mental shift from manager to leader.

A.



NEW HEIGHTS

B. **Southern Region
Middle Managers**



NEW HEIGHTS

C. **Southern Region
Middle Managers**



Know Your Middle Managers



Brenda Rogers (FL)

South Central District Extension Director;
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Where are you from and where did you grow up? *Born in Clearwater, Florida over Christmas break while my parents were home from college at UF. My Dad, a 3rd generation Florida Dairy Farmer started his operation in Manatee County, Florida. I'm the oldest of 3 girls, but not sure I'm grown up!*

How and when did you decide you wanted to be an Extension Middle Manager? *I don't think I really thought about being a middle manager, it just sort of happened. I've been blessed to have enjoyed every position I've ever had. Starting as a FCS Extension Agent, working through the ranks of promotion and then to County Extension Director. I left Extension*

for a few years to lead a county government department. I am very happy to be back with University of Florida Extension for the same reasons I've enjoyed the previous assignments.... I meet someone new every day, I learn something new every day, and I get to help someone every day.

What are your hobbies? *Walking, Traveling, and Needle Arts (Quilting, embroidery, cross stitch)*

Describe yourself in one word *Committed*

Where did you go on your last vacation? *Coast of Maine in October, we love the contrast of Fall colors with the blue of the ocean, and the rocky coast. We have visited 20 out of the last 22 Octobers.*

What was the last book you read? *The Energy Bus by Jon Gordon*

What is the most memorable situation you had to deal with as a Middle Manager? *Most memorable is seeing employees grow professionally and being present when they receive awards. Most difficult was layoffs on the county side in 2008-09-&10 due to budget cuts.*

Do you play a musical instrument?
Not anymore. I played clarinet in high school.

What is the most exciting place you have ever visited?
Yellowstone National Park on snowmobiles. Hawaii whale watching and Alaskan Bears were pretty amazing too!

What gives you the most satisfaction in your job? *Knowing that what we (the collective we) do makes a difference. I'm just finishing my first round of faculty appraisals, reading the reports of accomplishment created a huge feeling of pride in me. Not because of anything I did, but because I'm a part of something very special.*

**Remember to participate in
our MM Conference Calls
(10:00am EST/9:00am
Central) by dialing (712)
432-0931 and enter
participant code 911522#
on:
Thursday April 14, 2016
Thursday June 9, 2016
Thursday July 14, 2016**



Daniel Wilson (KY)

University of Kentucky District 2 Director;

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Where are you from and where did you grow up?

I am from/grew up in Jackson County, KY.

How and when did you decide you wanted to be an Extension Middle Manager?

One of my strengths is working with people and helping them to become better in whatever they are striving towards. When this opportunity became available I decided it was something I would be good at if given the opportunity.

What are your hobbies?

Horseback Riding, Farming and Reading

Describe yourself in one word

Motivated

Where did you go on your last vacation?

Black Hills, South Dakota

What was the last book you read?

"41" by George W. Bush

What is the most memorable situation you had to deal with as a Middle Manager?

So far it has been hiring/placing good Agents into the County.

Do you play a musical instrument?

No

What is the most exciting place you have ever visited?

Australia

What gives you the most satisfaction in your job?

I like to see things accomplished, people helped where they need it and watch people grow into being great Agents.



2015 Southern Region Middle Managers Officers

Chair: Jeff Young (University of Kentucky)

Vice-Chair: Sheri Schwab (North Carolina State University)

Secretary: Dee Cooper (Oklahoma State University)

Past Chair: Loni Johnson (Virginia Cooperative Extension)

Newsletter Editors: Eric Simonne and Julie Wilson (University of Florida)

Kentucky District Director Retires

Submitted by Jeff Young

It is with mixed emotions that Kentucky Cooperative Extension recently honored Louise Moore upon her retirement and outstand career. Louise was raised on a dairy and tobacco farm in Mason County, Kentucky and was active in 4H, FHA, music and cheerleading. She started her career with Extension as an intern in Bracken County in 1976 and on July 1st , 1977 (shortly after graduating from Eastern Kentucky University, with a major in vocational Home Economics education), Louise started work in Owsley County. It was a two agent county, where 4H duties were shared.

Louise notes that “Although I was from Mason County in northern Kentucky, I fell in love with the people of Eastern Kentucky and recognized the many talents they possessed”.

In 1994, Louise accepted the opportunity to become the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program Specialist for Southeastern KY. Her work involved teaching others how to stretch their food dollars, insure they had food at the end of the month, and working with a wonderful group of program assistants.

In February 2007, Louise was honored to become the District Director for UK District 2. During her tenure, agent and support staff positions in the district increased by about 20%. In addition she was an advocate for vital improvements at Kentucky’s Feltner 4-H Camp. These included an additional cabin/storm shelter. She leaves the position hoping that she has made a positive difference in a few lives. What more could anyone ask for?

One final note. While working in the schools with 4H, she met a young teacher, Maurice Moore, who was to become her future husband and with whom she recently celebrated 35 years of marriage. Louise and Maurice have two sons, Justin and Kyle, the greatest joys of their life. Her future plans involve travel and time with family. Louise is a servant at heart, and predicts you will find most of her future days actively involved in my church, doing mission trips and volunteering with God's Food Pantry.



Louise Moore; Kentucky District Director Retires

Middle Manager Success Stories

From Public School Education to Community Education



Richard H. Davis, Dallas County Extension Director, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service; Richard.Davis@ag.tamu.edu

Approaching retirement from a successful career in public schools -- as a high school teacher and principal, an educational consultant, a college instructor, and a new-teacher coach and mentor--, I was approached to apply with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to serve as the Dallas County Extension Director. My new responsibilities made me quickly understand the vast difference between the public school bureaucracy and the Extension bureaucracy. As I am nearing my two-year anniversary as the

Extension director in Dallas, I have poignant reflections about my first year.

Clearly, my experience as a professional educator had been primarily restricted to the classroom and the school building, with some programs, of course, outside the classroom. My tasks were clear: develop programs; develop and manage budgets; provide training for faculty, staff, and students; ensure a safe climate conducive for learning; serve the students, parents, and other key stakeholders with efficacy; managing every tax dollar and program with integrity.

When I stepped into my new Extension office, I had to quickly learn that “community education” was a different ballgame, requiring different strategies of engagement with both my staff and the public. I learned that, while Extension has been around about as long as traditional compulsory education, most people do not know what Extension is, and they do not know how to access all of the critical information and expertise of Extension programs and faculty. I have learned that, in order to be effective, it is not enough for my staff to have advanced degrees in their program area fields; they also need training on “how to teach,” “how to market our services,” and “how to reach” audiences who have been conditioned for so long by the public school systems. I am learning unique innovation-techniques of education.

My past administrative affiliations have been chiefly with local, state, and federal school officials, parents, students, and teachers. Today, my major relationships are with elected officials, community businesses,, civic organizational leaders, adults, parents, and youth. By contrast, I can wear my cowboy hat in the field as I couldn't in the classroom. Notably, even though I am an indisputably proud “Baylor Bear,” I don't mind struttin' with my Aggie shirt in front of our County Commissioner, Dr. Elba Garcia (see photo). My approach is different, but my passion is the same: *serve with dignity, with integrity, and with efficiency*. Our community needs to know what Extension is; why it is: and how they can become more knowledgeable, more healthy, and more frugal with natural resources. Our youth need to know that there is a world outside the classroom in which they can develop in new and exciting ways. I really like Extension – my new world of community education.



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West Virginia

VACANT



"Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity. I am not sure about the universe. But that's me being stupid."

- Albert Einstein