

NEW HEIGHTS

Southern Region Middle Managers Newsletter

February 2017



Middle Managers work with GREAT people!

By: Dee Cooper, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, dee.cooper@okstate.edu

In Oklahoma, MMs conduct Annual Extension Educators Performance Reviews in January and February. Every year in December, I usually start dreading this process. Can you relate to this? It is going to take a lot of time, it disrupts my normal schedule, and I am going to have to figure out how to say the same thing 50 different ways to educators of all ages and experience levels... It is just not my favorite time of the year.



We all need to figure out how to effectively deal with age groups with viewpoints that are different than our own. As MMs, we have to try to understand the Millennials. However, MMs before us had to try to understand the Gen Xers; the MMs before them had to try to understand the Baby Boomers; and the MMs before them had to try to understand prohibition. Well, I went off the rail there a little bit, but you get my drift: all MMs have worked with professionals with different views.

Then, every year, the same thing happens to me: the Extension Educators come into my office and start talking about the fantastic programs they are conducting out in the counties. And every year, I am amazed! The innovation and creativity they come up with is unbelievable. In addition, and most importantly, I see these same qualities in all the different age groups. Outstanding individuals exist in every group and 99% of them work extremely hard. GREAT people are really not that different, whatever their background, whatever their age.

I hope you get the chance to appreciate the fantastic things your GREAT people do as well.

And remember, that other 1%.....well, that is job security.

Hope to see you in Asheville.

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A Word from our Administrative Advisor

Extension makes a difference for all those we reach and serve: lead strong and well!



By: **Caroyln J. Williams, Cooperative Extension
Prairie View A & M University, cjwilliams@pvamu.edu**

What a wonderful time to be a “leader” on the Extension journey. We have insurmountable success

stories to publish due to our interaction and motivational strategies with families, farmers, producers, youth, and communities. However, because we open our hearts and offer our support, we learn as much from our participants as they learn from us. Leadership is something we perform each day. We have an opportunity to impact those we meet every day. We, Extension leaders, are most fortunate to work and live in such a rich and culturally diverse community.

In order to be effective as leaders, we need to apply the “TEAM” approach: Together Everyone Accomplishes More. As we collaborate with diverse audiences it’s important to learn how to ask questions, not just give answers. Because of the mandate, we have been given to address the needs of underrepresented and underserved audiences in the 1890 community, we focus on intentional strategies to take people where they want to go and need to be.

Literature on successful strategies for working with underrepresented and underserved families had identified the following components as ingredients for success:

- Respect the individuals with whom you work. Make sure you are prepared for the audience and have sufficient time for the program. Be consistent and keep promises, especially to follow-up.
- Recognize efforts. Build support and trust by recognizing the participant’s effort every step of the way. Notice and praise small positive changes to encourage participants and yourself.
- Maintain confidentiality. Be sensitive to issues that are confidential. Once participants begin to speak frankly, maintain their trust.



- Keep expectations realistic. Be patient. It will take some participants a long time to learn and practice new skills. You will not change the world overnight.
- Find as many positives as possible. Find solutions that work even in the face of insurmountable barriers. Use each solution as an encouraging sign to keep people moving forward.
- Find the strengths in each participant. Remind them of their strengths frequently. Show them that you believe in them and their ability to manage their own reality.
- Be prepared with programming, resources, and answers to questions. The more prepared you are the more the families and individuals will trust your sincerity in wanting to make a difference. Success in working with underrepresented and underserved families come from true commitment, dedication, stamina and a sincere respect that all human beings are equally deserving of a good life. Therefore, respect the practical knowledge and incredible coping skills that these families possess and communicate your trust in each individual.

I am most grateful for my exciting and rewarding Extension journey of 30+ years. I stand strongly on a favorite leadership philosophy “what you send into the lives of others will one day return to your own”.

So, lead strong and well!

A Word from our Guest Extension Director

Leadership as a middle manager

By: Jimmy Henning, Director of the Cooperative Extension Service at the University of Kentucky, jhenning@uky.edu



Middle manager jobs are some of the most important and yet most difficult in the land grant system. Important because you influence, support, coach, mentor and develop the agents and educators that serve our clientele. Difficult because of all the word 'middle' entails. One of the most important things you must provide is leadership and you must develop it in others. But what is essential in leadership?

General Norman Schwarzkopf, leader of US Operation Desert Storm calls leadership "a potent combination of strategy and character. If you must be without one, be without strategy." Interesting priorities from a man who chooses leaders for battle.

So, to General Schwarzkopf, the essential in leadership is not vision or strategy but character. Strategy or vision gets attention and headlines, but character carries the load. So, what does this look like for managers?

Middle managers with character are good leaders because their charges trust them. These managers keep promises, hold confidences, and follow through. Their

actions are fair, equitable and transparent. Everyone they manage gets the same chance to succeed and have the same expectations to perform.

Middle managers with character support their people even when well-intended efforts go awry. In other words, you have their back. My best boss, the best leader I ever served under, stood up for me in the decisions I made, even though he sometimes took heat because of them. I knew I had his support. He had character, and people gladly followed him.

The best thing about the General's interpretation of leadership is that we can work to improve our character by the kind of choices we make. In my experience, the vision we need develops with time. But start with character.

On the light side –
Be sure to check out the common laws
MM's cannot escape (even if they try!)
throughout this issue! Enjoy!

Law of Public Speaking –
A CLOSED MOUTH GATHERS NO FEET!

Replacing the event-based with issues-based unit plan of work to foster cross-discipline collaboration in extension offices in Virginia

By: Dan Gorelich, Virginia Cooperative Extension, dalego@vt.edu



As part of the Planning and Reporting process, Virginia's Unit Coordinators are asked to complete a Unit Plan of Work (UPOW).

Recognizing that agents are typically busy and may tend to silo programs

within a Unit office, the UPOW was instituted around 2006 to insure that all Unit faculty and staff were working collaboratively on at least one event per year.



In the VCE Central District, Unit-level faculty collaborate on numerous interdisciplinary programming events throughout the year. Rather than asking "what event can we do" together, UPOW-related questions were more commonly along the lines of "which event should we pick." Over time, it became clear that this approach to the UPOW did not provide any real stimulus to Unit level collaborative work in the Central District.

In Fall 2013, I challenged Unit Coordinators to create an *issues-based*—rather than an *event-based*—UPOW for 2014. More specifically, rather than coming together around a single event, Unit faculty and staff were asked to collaborate on an issue of importance to their locality. Accompanying this charge was the recognition that making progress toward resolving complex community issues would require faculty to work together on the issue throughout the year, or even multiple years. The issues-based UPOW requires a different way of thinking. For example, staffing a booth at Reality Store—a common event-based UPOW—requires far less thought than strategizing how agents in all program areas can work together to help lift county residents out of poverty.

Issues-based UPOW's create more meaningful and impactful collaborative efforts. For example, the Virginia Cooperative Extension-Franklin County UPOW involved the development of a half-acre community giving and teaching garden. The garden played host to a field day demonstrating crop culture, a field-to-table cooking demonstration, a rain-barrel construction workshop, and supplied over 5,000 pounds of fresh produce to local food banks, serving approximately 300 individual families over the course of the growing season.

Based on issues-based UPOW success stories, Virginia Cooperative Extension adopted the approach statewide for the 2016 calendar year.

Sharing the extension message with elected officials: “Empowering local leaders”

By: Jeffrey Young, jeffrey.young@uky.edu and David Herbst, dherbst@email.uky.edu, Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service

Central Kentucky agents and District 6 Director David Herbst recently planned, trained and presented “Empowering Local Leaders” to agents and volunteers in ten counties. The presentations centered on the following topics:

1. Making Your Voice Heard
2. *When* to Make Your Voice Heard
3. *How* to Make Your Voice Heard
4. Communicating with Local, State and National elected officials
 - a. Scheduling Personal Visits with Local, State and National elected officials
 - b. Making Phone Calls
 - c. Written Communications – letters
 - d. Emails
 - e. Social Media
5. Being an Effective Advocate
6. Common Advocacy Mistakes
7. Establishing Relationships with Congressional Staffers

Results of the pre- and post- training evaluation revealed that a 25% increase in participant knowledge of the legislative process; 93% of participants felt more prepared to contact an elected official about an issue that concerned them, and 41% were likely to contact an elected official in the next six months. Plans are underway to share this presentation statewide during the next year.



Jeffrey Young, PhD, Univ. of Kentucky
CES Director of County Operations



David Herbst, Univ. of Kentucky,
District 6 Director, Cooperative Extension Service

The Coffee Law - As soon as you sit down to a cup of hot coffee, your boss will ask you to do something which will last until the coffee is cold.

Variant: As soon as an Extension educator sits down to a cup of hot coffee, his/her MM will ask to do something which will last until the coffee is cold.

Training for success: Beyond new employee orientation

By: Allisen Penn, University of Tennessee Extension, allisenpenn@utk.edu



University of Tennessee Extension Central Region team members:

Allisen Penn, Regional Program Leader; Martin Koon, Regional Program Leader

Jim Stewart, Regional Director; Jamie Harris, Area 4-H Specialist (left to right)

How long does it take to onboard new Extension Agents?

Often in Extension, we rely on a week-long New Employee Orientation to provide all the onboarding a new Extension Agent needs to be effective. Professionals in the training and development field consider three months to a year a reasonable amount of time to onboard new employees. In Extension, one to three years may be a more realistic expectation.

The University of Tennessee Extension Central Region Staff recognizes new agents need training beyond New Employee Orientation and subject matter in-service to become successful. To address this need, the Central Region Extension Staff hosts the Early Career Cohort to help new employees learn the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to be an effective Extension Agent. All new agents (ANR, FCS, 4-H) in the Region become members of the cohort upon

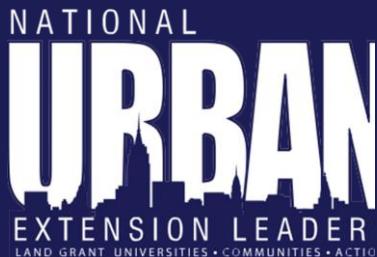
employment and remain in the group for three years. The cohort meets three times a year and focuses on soft skills and professional skills, such as communication; conflict integration; time management; teaching methods; and program planning. During Early Career Cohort meetings, new agents share ideas, discuss concerns, and build relationships.

Since beginning the Early Career Cohort in 2011, we have learned the time we invest as a Regional Staff in our new employees pays dividends. The Cohort helps new employees assimilate into the organization, connect with peers, and tackle issues not addressed in other training. Graduates of the program, tell us, the Early Career Cohort helped them, "Establish relationships within Extension," "Discuss and hear about new ideas, what may have worked, what didn't work," and "Realize I wasn't alone and not the only one having issues from time to time."

Law of Commercial Marketing Strategy –

As soon as you find a product that you really like, they will stop making it OR the store will stop selling it!

Variant – As soon as Extension offers a program that you really like, the grant will end or the educator in charge will find another job.



Benefits of Membership

By: Jennifer Cocanougher, jcocanou@uky.edu and Willie Howard, Jr., whowardj@uky.edu, Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service

National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL) is a nationwide network of urban Extension professionals that provides members opportunities to develop relationships with like-minded professionals that are charged with addressing similar issues to serve urban communities. NUEL provides opportunities for collaboration on funding proposals. NUEL also offers members professional development through programmatic discoveries and lectures for innovative thought-leaders. NUEL's membership objectives are to create:

- Opportunities for national collaboration around specific focus areas.
- Networking to increases the ability for urban Extension professionals to establish internal and external partnerships.
- A voice for members to advance the national urban Extension agenda and the National Urban Extension Conference.
- Opportunities for members to gain national recognition for their award -winning programs.
- Engaging opportunities to participate in the following subcommittees to shape the organizational objectives of the national urban Extension network: Research, Communications, Partnerships, Professional Development and Strategic Alignment and Urban Policy.

The University of Minnesota is proud to host the 2017 National Urban Extension Conference. The conference will take place at the Radisson Blu located at the Mall of America, in Bloomington, Minnesota. The conference program will take place Monday, May 8-11th and preceded by the National Urban Leaders meeting on Sunday May 7th.

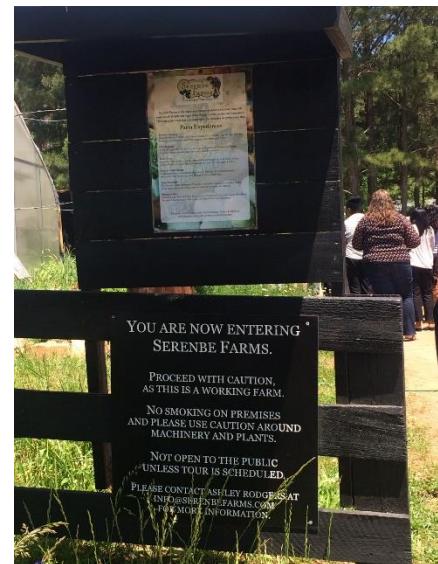
Registration is now open:

<https://www.regonline.com/registration/Checkin.aspx?EventID=1901993>

Connect via Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/UrbanExtensionConference2017/>

National Urban Extension Conference in Atlanta included tours of urban agriculture developments such as Serenbe Farms.



The Good Coach

By: Matt Benge, Extension Assistant Professor, University of Florida, mattbenge@ufl.edu



Modern-day Middle Managers' responsibilities list seems to be ever increasing and rich in challenges. Managers are expected to lead, supervise, discipline, coach, and listen, just to name a few. We often become busy with responding to email, writing publications and articles, teaching, or fulfilling other administrative duties.

Be honest with yourself and answer this question: "How often do I seek feedback from my employees I supervise on my coaching ability?" Below are two distinct sets of coaching behaviors. The first is a list of good coaching behaviors, and the second is a list of coaching behaviors that can trap managers.

Good Coaches:

- Help someone understand themselves more fully so they leverage their strengths
- Advance the clear formation of goals
- Facilitated self-assessment – what worked well? What did not?
- Listen carefully and show a keen interest in what the employee shares
- Ask thought provoking questions
- Help the employee consider ideas, actions, and strengths not considered before
- Act as a safe sounding board
- Provide praise and encouragement
- Tap untested potential

Traps Coaches Need to Avoid:

- Acting like experts and giving the answers
- Lecturing, telling, and pontificating
- Analyzing the reasons for the problems
- Gathering facts and information that only satisfies the coach's curiosity
- Giving advice
- Imposing own opinions and solutions

To get real and valuable feedback on your coaching behavior, use the behaviors from the above lists and create a short survey for your employees to complete. The results can provide solid data to drive you to become a better manager and coach!

For more information on coaching, check out Kevin Eikenberry's 'Coaching Success in 10 Sentences':

http://blog.kevineikenberry.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/coaching_infographic.pdf

Why other people wreck brainstorming

By: Brenda C. Williams, bjcw@ufl.edu and Eric Simonne, esimonne@ufl.edu, University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Science, Florida Extension



Which MM has not participated or organized a brainstorm session? Typically, these sessions get a bunch of people together who are instructed to throw out ideas without worrying about constraints or criticism. Participants should not even worry about how strange the ideas are, “just come up with as many as you can” – and “build on them”. Simple? No! Too often, this method does not work!

As outlined in the full article accessible below, the big reason for this failure comes from the nature of group interaction itself. In a typical session, the most extrovert member of the group throws out the first idea –which acts a little like a contaminant; it influences the working memory of everyone else in the group from that point forward. That's because as soon as you hear an idea, it serves as a retrieval cue. It automatically reaches into your memory and starts to pull out information related to that idea. By the time a few people have thrown out ideas, the entire group is now thinking about the problem in

just about the same way. As a result, groups explore an ever-narrower range of potential ideas than individuals who work alone.

Is there a solution? First, the group needs to think *divergently*—each member needs to come up with as many different possibilities as they can. Alone. In writing. Each member needs to pursue his/her ideas. It is only after those independent ideas are generated that the group leader should collect them and send them around to the entire group. Then the group needs to *converge* on a few ideas that it wants to pursue.

Unlike traditional brainstorming, idea generation techniques that use this structure tend to work well. Groups whose members work alone when they need to diverge, and together when they need to converge, generate more ideas and *better* ideas than people who only work alone. Try it! And let us know how successful it was!

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3067587/work-smart/why-other-people-wreck-brainstorms-and-how-to-stop-them>

Law of Gravity –
Any appraisal document, letter template or pen when dropped, will fly or roll to the least accessible place in the universe.

Law of Probability –
The probability of being watched is directly proportional to the stupidity of your act.

Watch the video: Millennials in the workplace

All the conferences or professional development meetings today dedicate some time on the program on a topic all MMs have on their minds on a daily basis: Millennials, "The Millennials". Who are they? And how do we handle them in the workplace? Ironically, most trainings on millennials are made by ... Baby Boomers or Gen Xers! Also, these millennials do not come from another planet: they are our sons, daughters, nieces and nephews! How come we made them and raised them (tried to at least) ... and we do not know how to handle them in the workplace?

In the link below, Simon Sinek provides some good answers on "Millennials in the workplace" during 15 minutes ... and leaves MMs thinking for hours. Enjoy!

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwib4LPyq_bQAhXG5yYKHczwAoQyCkIHDA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DhER0Qp6QJNU&usg=AFQjCNH5I7j0seQTX7SGwiQwPpUb3X3u2g&sig2=xHBuFgiu2vZOCLMqWGCo6g&bvm=bv.141536425,d.eWE



About the author: Simon O. Sinek is a British/American author, motivational speaker and marketing consultant. He is the author of three books including the 2009 best seller "Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action".

"Working hard for something you do not care about is called stress.

Working hard for something you do care about is called passion"

- Simon Sinek

The encouraging news is that the national discussion has recently shifted from "how different and disruptive Millennials are in the work place" to "how can we best allow them to offer their talents and passion in the workplace – and flourish in Extension?".

Law of Logical Argument –
Anything is possible – especially if you don't know what you are talking about.

Two Virginia Cooperative Extension District Directors to retire in 2017 – Good luck and we will miss you!



Doris Heath, VCE Southeast District Director will be retiring February 28. A twice graduate of Virginia State University with her BS and MS in Home Economics. She started her career with VCE in 1988. She spent 25 years as a Family and Consumer Science agent delivering programs to residents in the areas of financial management and human development. Her work was inclusive of working and partnering with others throughout the State of Virginia. She is ending her career as the SE District Director. Doris is looking forward to taking some time off to collect her thoughts and prepare for her future as a retiree. She and her husband will be taking some time to do some traveling and Doris will be looking for opportunities to share her talents and skills.



Cyndi Marston, VCE Northern District Director is retiring in February 28 after 35 years of service with the State of Virginia. After teaching horticulture at a local college, she came to Virginia Cooperative Extension in 2003 as Agriculture and Natural Resources Horticulture Agent in the Frederick County Unit. After two years, she moved into a District Program Leader role with the Northwest District. Upon the resignation of the District Director, she was named Acting District Director for the Northwest District. In 2010, when the Districts in Virginia were collapsed from six to four, she was named the Northern District Director and served in that role until her retirement on February 28th.

Submitted by Lonnie Johnson, VCE

Important Information: Don't Forget!

Southern Region Middle Managers Conference March 13-16, 2017 – Asheville, NC



See you soon at the Southern Region Middle Managers Conference held March 13-16, 2017 in scenic Asheville, NC.

Thank you to our hosts and the members of the planning Committee: Barbara Board, Fletcher Barber, Jr., James Cowden, Stephen Greer, Lonnie Johnson, Blake Lanford, Clinton McRae, Lonnette Marsh, Sheri Schwab, Keith Walters, and Jeffrey Young.

Safe travels to Ashville and we will see you soon!

For program visit:

[http://srpln.msstate.edu/pln/files/mm_files/Middle%20Managers%20Conference%202017_agenda%20\(1\).pdf](http://srpln.msstate.edu/pln/files/mm_files/Middle%20Managers%20Conference%202017_agenda%20(1).pdf)

**Remember to participate in our
MM conference calls!**

(10:00am EST/9:00am Central)
Dial (712) 432-0931 and
enter participant code 911522#

(2nd Thursdays)

April 13th, 2017

June 8th, 2017

July 13th, 2017

**2016 Southern Region
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Vice-Chair: Dee Cooper (Oklahoma State University)
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Past Chair: Jeff Young (University of Kentucky)
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Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

West Virginia
vacant



Doctors' Law - If you don't feel well, make an appointment to go to the doctor; by the time you get there, you'll feel better.

But if you don't make an appointment, you will remain sick.

Variant: Law of miraculous recoveries - Do not call in sick at the office one day and post selfies of you dancing at a party that same evening.