
Shifting Gears: Members are the “New Breed”

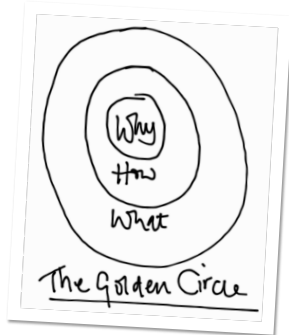
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The Why Matters Most

Members are, and have been, the heart and soul of most nonprofit organizations. The challenge facing today’s organizations range from the differing perspectives of multiple generations, technology and its effect on communications and relationships, and the shifting landscape of agriculture, food, and leisure. As we move into beyond 2015, we must “shift gears” to embrace and respond to these changes (and opportunities).

In *Servant – Retrospect and Prospect*, Robert Greenleaf said, “What separates company X from the rest is unconventional thinking about its ‘dream’ – what this business wants to be, how its priorities are set and how it organizes to serve. It has a radically different philosophy and self-image.”



Simon Sinek, author of *Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Action* and an accompanying TED Talk, introduced the Golden Circle which illustrates that by knowing and leading from our ‘why’ we will serve and lead better.

WHY – The inspired path

HOW – The Road Map

WHAT – Tactics and activities to implement ‘the plan’

WHY, not WHAT drives the competitive edge. Sinek added, “People don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it. And what you do simply proves what you believe.”

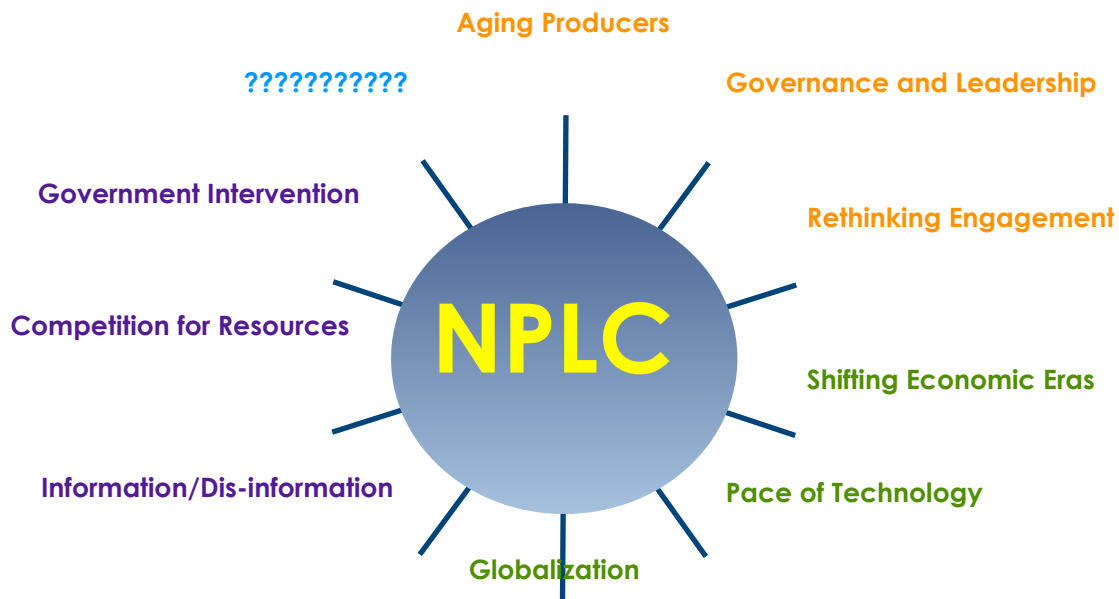
Do you know your *why*? Or, your organization's *why*? You can find it by asking the questions that resonate deep from within. Legendary basketball coach John Wooden said, "When you start having all the right answers, you'll stop asking all the right questions."

Leadership requires followership and vice versa. Each depends on the other and cannot be separated. We can be appointed to manage or required to comply. However, we choose to lead and to follow. Robert Greenleaf's *Definition of Servant Leadership* – "The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead."

Greenleaf's Best Test – "The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived?"

Servant Leadership is a *philosophy*. It is not a style, formula, or model. It is a personal philosophy that melds with others inside organizations to create the *principles* that sustain culture. Finally, it is *practiced* in the context of our daily lives.

Staying Relevant



As we look at the organizations that make up the National Pedigreed Livestock Council, there are relevance issues poking at them. I've identified nine broad issues and left the tenth one as a question because each organization has that one issue that's unique to it.

Leading and Managing - aging producers, governance and leadership, engagement

Change and Progress - shifting economy, pace of technology, globalization

Policy and Pressure - information and dis-information, competition for resources, government intervention

The paradox of leading and managing

To begin, agriculture's population is aging rapidly. Coupled with shrinking agricultural population, we should be concerned where members and leaders will come from. Plus, these same people are being asked to take on volunteer roles in community organizations, government, schools, churches, and more.

Meanwhile, the generational make-up of our society is expanding with five large generational groups changing how we live, learn, work, and play. There is still a significant number of WWII-era children - **Traditionalists** born before 1946. They value thriftiness, order, respect and discipline having been raised in the adversity of the Great Depression and WWII. On their heels are the **Baby Boomers**, born between 1946-1964, they are the largest generation. When they were young, many rebelled against the order and control of their parents' generation. They are workaholics, focused on convenience, consumer-focused, and generally optimistic, but the 2008 Recession, slowed down their efforts to retire "early" frustrating those that follow. Next up is **Gen-X**, born between 1965-1980, and they are the anti-Boomers. They launched dual careers, prefer teams rather than individual pursuits, spend conservatively because they fear Boomers will burn through Social Security, and value work-life integration since their workaholic predecessors are aging and are tired or worn out.



The newest generation in the work force is the **Millennials** - born between 1981-1999. They are children of the hyper-competitive Baby Boomers, have experienced pre-mature affluence, value equality and diversity in power-authority-leadership, believe that technology can always find a solution primarily because they are digital natives. They are also entrepreneurial since they have seen their parents work for years with companies that restructured - eliminating jobs and pensions - and seek meaningful work. Coming fast behind them are the **Textsters** - born after 2000. They are visually stimulated, socially connected, see technology as a constant wave, everybody gets a trophy, and have only known war, terrorism, and global unrest. Who will join, participate, serve, and lead? How will it be different?

One of the challenges of being a self-aware leader is believing that our views and experiences are "normal" and therefore the decisions we make, good or bad, constitute "common sense." However, our cultural differences, defining events, and personal views, values, and experiences prove that **common sense just isn't common!**

We have great opportunities to leap forward if we rethink leadership and governance in how we are connected to people, how we are community with people, and what we pursue together.

Personality profiles and skills assessments are simply indicators, not boundaries. As an association executive, you may be a Seeker, Steward, Catalyst, Collaborator, Protector, or a combination. Don't limit yourself or others. We are more than you see. Let's explore who we are beyond our titles and job responsibilities. In this exercise, answer these four questions:



1. What is your most valuable gift?
2. What is your most developed skill?
3. What are you passionate about?
4. What is your greatest artistic ability?

As you create and nurture your board, make sure they know (and you know) their roles and responsibilities and respect their contributions. Do they provide leadership or management? Do they represent yesterday's or tomorrow's demographics? What are their self-formed groups - teams, committees, task forces, ad-hocs? What defines too little, too much or just the right amount of communication? Is there a shared vision built through planning or a bag of program and services (and what role does the board play in either's success?) Who decides what to keep, add, change, or discontinue?

We need to rethink the our conversation. Too many conversations are anything but. They are sparring matches between *hows* and *whats* and less time is spent seeking the *why*. In the food and ag arena we too often start conversations/contentious debates by focusing on this OR that, thus limiting our opportunities,. However, a dialogue focusing on this AND that will help us engage all the voices in the future

AND

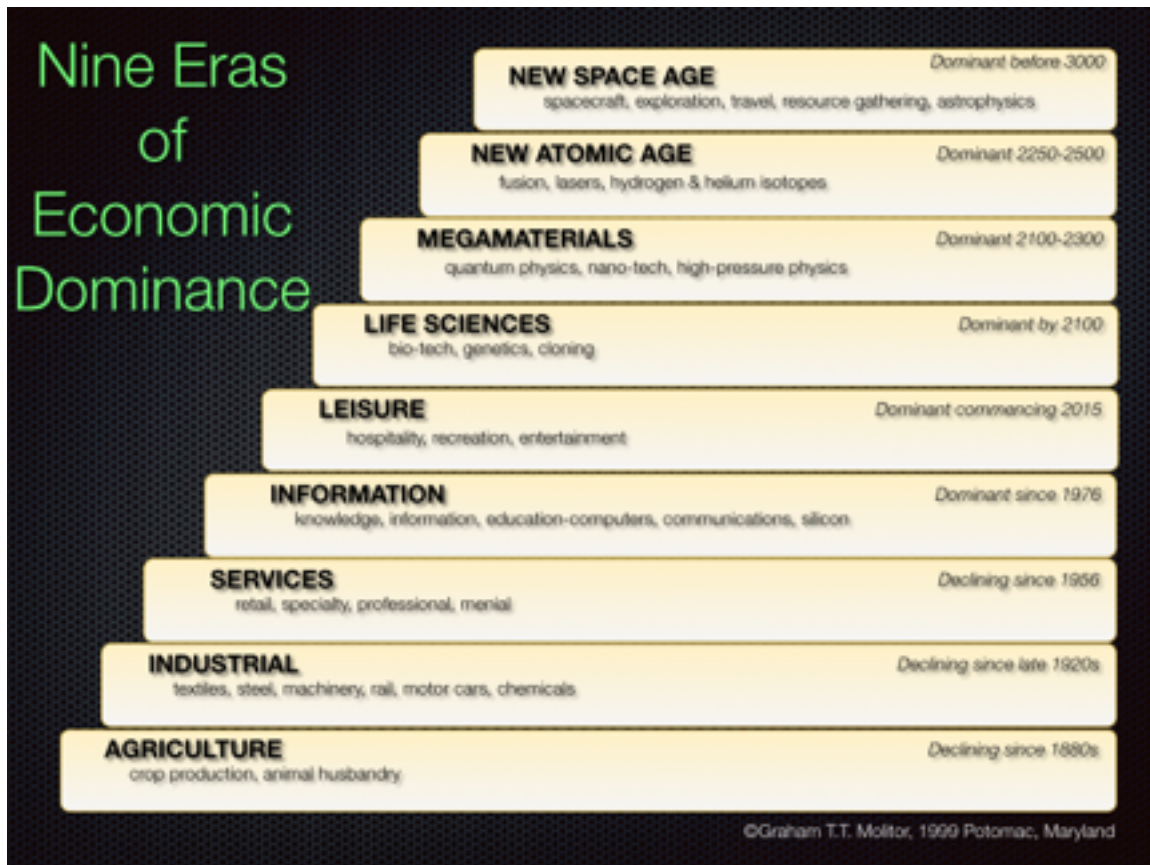
of food production and distribution – organic AND natural AND commercial production, local markets AND global distribution, access AND abundance. OR/BUT is about choosing which dots count and limits the potential, while AND is about connecting and embracing the full range of possibilities.

Legendary basketball coach John Wooden saw his role as teacher first. He was known for his rigorous practices, on court stoicism, his focus on nurturing great men to become the best they could be. This resulted in great success on and off the court. He imparted his learned wisdom in the many sayings he shared with his players. My favorite is, “It takes ten hands to score a basket.”

As you build your team, carefully consider your role. If you want to lead from the top, you must serve from the bottom. Members and employees don't work for you – “You are theirs.”

Change and Progress

Context matters and is ever-changing. Futurist Graham T.T. Molitor wrote a book in 2002, *The Next 1,000 Years*, in which he explored the engines that will drive the eras of economic dominance in this millennium. He also looked at previous eras to put them in perspective. In 2-D visuals, the eras appear to have distinct starting and stopping points. But in reality, the eras build on each other. For example, agriculture was the first economic era, so each time a new era emerged, agriculture did not disappear but rather had to integrate significant structural changes. Therefore, agriculture changed in the industrial era, then service, information, leisure, and now life sciences eras. With the pace of change increasing, we are now seeing multiple eras emerge within a few generations.



Greenleaf said, “Foresight is the ‘lead’ that the leader has. Once leaders lose this lead and events start to force their hand, they are leaders in name only. They are not leading, but are reacting to

immediate events, and they probably will not long be leaders.” Foresight precedes vision, strategic planning, business and operations planning. It ultimately leads back to “Why.”



Without foresight, leaders can become paralyzed. Greenleaf said, “On an important decision one rarely has 100% of the information needed for a good decision no matter how much one spends or how long one waits. And, if one waits too long, he has a different problem and has to start all over. This is the terrible dilemma of the hesitant decision maker.”

Greenleaf said that using foresight requires us to step back from the busyness and business of our daily lives. “The ability to withdraw and reorient oneself, if only for a moment, presumes that one has learned the art of systematic neglect, to sort out the more important from the less important – and the important from the urgent – and attend to the more important, even though there may be penalties and censure for the neglect of something else.” How and when do you withdraw and reorient?

Policy and Progress

Today we are inundated with data and information and access to it. Will we use it to learn and grow or divide and conquer? As production agriculture has become more disconnected from daily life we encounter the dilemma of truth-seeking coupled with natural ignorance. A recent consumer attitude and awareness study by Oklahoma State University found that consumers want labeling to know what is and isn't in their food. This makes sense except that 80% of the polled group also wants labeling for products containing DNA! So we face the challenge of food bloggers, animal bloggers, and rural life bloggers armed with pseudo-science and ready to demonize those who disagree.

Meanwhile, the government intervenes to protect us from ourselves - our personal and community responsibilities. And, with all the mix of views on food and ag, elected officials vote by polling numbers or choose gridlock because “the industry just can't agree.” As social pressures and problems escalate, there is a growing competition for resources. We have created huge social systems - cities, metropolises, and mega-cities that require complementary systems to support them - food production, transportation, business, leisure, schools, and housing. This is putting tremendous pressure on natural resources, maintaining old infrastructure while building new, and rethinking supply chains and systems.



Your challenge

Your organization faces some challenge that is unique to it. Be curious, be creative, be collaborative, be caring in your pursuit of the greater good.

Max De Pree, retired CEO of Herman Miller, says, “Great leaders have the ability to abandon themselves to the wild ideas of others.” He added, “ You have to, because the higher you get the more amateur you become.”



Serving and leading is critical to the future of our organizations, the people they serve and the communities in which live, learn, work, and play. As we shift gears, we have work faster, smarter, and maximize each and every resource. As a membership

organization it comes down this simple perspective, “**It’s not who we are TO each other, it’s who we are FOR each other.**”



Phillip Anderson
Chief ReThinker
ReThink!
1627 Springmill Ponds Circle • Carmel, IN 46032
c: 317.294.2775 • rethinkphil@gmail.com
www.rethinkphil.weebly.com • @rethinkphil