

Having the Courage to Lead by Example- The Sanborn Mantra

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A few years ago, I watched an interview with a famous author. The interviewer asked him what advice he had for aspiring writers. The author simply stated, “writer’s write.” He went on to explain how many people talk about writing a book, but so few actually have the discipline to sit down and do the heavy lifting of actually writing. I believe a similar maxim is true of leadership – leader’s lead. They take the initiative to get engaged and make a difference. As I have interviewed leaders across our state, I have been inspired and encouraged by the examples of people who with passion and purpose are daily engaged in leadership. Recently, I had the good fortune to interview one of my own favorite authors and teachers on leadership – Mark Sanborn.

Mark is one the leading thought leaders in the country today on leadership, team building, customer service and change. He gave his first speech at age ten in a 4-H contest. He lost, but he found his calling. Mark paid his way through college at Ohio State University by giving after dinner speeches. After graduation, he worked in the magazine publishing industry, and he launched his professional speaking and development business in 1986. During his career, Mark has authored seven books including the international best seller *The Fred Factor*. He is a former President of the National Speakers Association and has been inducted into the Association’s Hall of Fame. Mark works with over 2,200 clients including Capital One, Costco, Enterprise Rent-a-Car, FedEx, Harley-Davidson, and Hewlett Packard.

I believe what makes people truly successful is not what they do, but why they do it. Mark was asked onetime how he would like to be remembered to which he replied, “While alive, he lived. While he lived, he loved. Because he loved, he served. And when he served, he led.” This statement gives insight into the “why” for Mark and explains his passion and energy for helping others be better leaders. I asked him what advice he had for aspiring leaders. Mark pointed to the title to one of his books, *You Don’t Need a Title to Be a Leader*. He emphasized that, “Leadership is about skills and abilities and not position or status.” Mark encourages people to be engaged in actual leadership activities. He noted that, “there are abundant opportunities for leadership in our schools, churches, communities, and workplaces.”

Since Mark travels the world teaching about leadership, I wanted to know what principles he applied in his own business, Sanborn & Associates, Inc. He shared with me that in our busy lives today that it’s easy to confuse “activity with accomplishment.” He pointed out the fact that “by doing less we can actually accomplish more.” Mark tries to focus more on the results that he is trying to achieve and “to focus on his outputs rather than the inputs.” He went on to explain that one of the principles he teaches and lives by is the power of focus. He also pointed out that, “We only have three resources in life - our time, expertise, and the time and expertise of others. How we focus these resources will create income, success, and results in our lives.”

I am excited to share with the readers of this column that Mark will speaking at a Leadmoor luncheon event at Broadmoor Baptist Church, in Madison on Thursday, February 17th. I know that businesses from around the state will be bringing their teams to hear Mark’s inspiring and encouraging message. Tickets are available on online at (<http://www.broadmoor.org/leadmoor>.)

I agree with Mark's assessment that you don't have to wait until you are CEO to lead. In fact, as he points out there are leadership opportunities all around us. If you want to sharpen your leadership skills, I encourage you to check out Mark's website www.marksanborn.com which has a great deal of resources. In addition, we should all feel challenged to consider where we can bring our passion and energy to lead in our own sphere of influence. It's easy to complain about the challenges we face as a society. However, it takes courage to be engaged and to lead by example.

Quick Facts:

Mark Sanborn, President Sanborn & Associates, Inc.

First Job: "I grew up on a farm so at an early age I helped my father and grandfather with the daily chores on the farm. I also mowed lawns, and in high school I worked on another farm. These early responsibilities taught me the value of hard work."

Favorite Books On Business and Leadership: *Future Perfect* (Stan Davis); *An Unstoppable Force* (Erwin McManus); *The Leadership Challenge* (James Kouzes and Barry Posner). "I also enjoy the works of C.S. Lewis and G.K. Chesterton."

Proudest Moment as a Leader: "I believe the real question of leadership is whether anyone is getting better because of you. Growing others is what leadership is all about. For me, whenever someone shares that they have become better because what I wrote or taught then those are the moments I most enjoy."

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