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“Keeping Your Sanity, Wits and Humor While Leading an Advancement Team”

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Lessons Learned from Colleagues*

Revel in and enjoy the energy of others - I tend to walk around if there is a spare minute - share stories, laugh, listen. We all work hard; knowing that a smile or a laugh can provide a boost means a great deal to me. And it gives me energy!

I am happy to have fun and laugh at myself if it lifts spirits of others - not all the time, mind you, but it's important to signal that having fun is important. Colleagues at Bates gave me a fabulous "Bobcat hat" for the holidays - it's our mascot. They put together this very silly hat. I love it - it's in my office and it helps us all remember how much fun we can have together. Earlier in the fall I thought I was being a bit "crabby" and found a funny crab hat - truly - and wore it to work one morning. Again, it's a signal that we can all laugh and still get the work done. (That crab hat sits on my shelf for all to see!)

Find quiet time to regenerate if you need it - shut the door, take a short walk, listen to music, read the paper for 10 minutes -- the break helps to "stop the noise" and get balanced.

If it doesn't involve someone's health or open flame, it's not a crisis.

You cannot put toothpaste back in a tube. Accept responsibility, come up with a plan for preventing the mistake from happening again, and move on.

Avoiding conflict NEVER makes one go away – it only allows it to get bigger.

Address conflicts in a fair and timely manner and everyone will benefit.

Self-deprecating humor is essential for those of us on the advancement services/operations side of the house.

Don't sweat the small stuff. When something goes wrong ask yourself, will this matter in six months, a year, etc.?

Set both short term and long term goals—you know you need to raise a billion dollars by 2015. The thought can be overwhelming. What are you going to do today that will help you reach that goal?

Take a 10 minute walk at lunch—we know how tempting it is to sit at your desk through lunch and get more work done. A short walk can clear your head and get you ready to face the afternoon.

Get out there and meet people! The higher up you get in the profession, the more time you spend managing people instead of being out in the field. A visit with a valued donor and friend can help us remember why we got into this line of work in the first place.

Always remember that even on your worst, horrible, nightmarish day you have probably done something, no matter how small it may seem, that advances your mission and makes the world a better place for somebody, someday.

If no one is lying on the floor in a pool of blood and the paramedics aren't on the way, then it's not really a crisis, is it?

Have a close and trusted colleague or confidant that you can go to when needed to honestly vent, laugh, eye roll or let off steam when needed.

Cultivate lots of colleagues from other places and draw on them to run ideas by, ask for litmus tests, and generally remind yourself that you are not alone in your challenges and stress. They often have really good ideas for you and can put things in perspective.

Keep a Kudos file. Really. A file folder where you put all those nice email notes, wonderful things people say about you and a testimony to your own accomplishments and accolades. Useful for resume building as well as giving yourself a pat on the back.

Martinis at the *Four Seasons* are always helpful. As is getting together with others after work or over lunch or out of the office and not always talking about work. Take someone to lunch and don't talk about work; get to know them.

Develop a mentor who you can go to for professional advice and for personal growth. Make sure you reciprocate and do your part in the relationship.

Volunteer at CASE conferences so you can meet lots of other people who are just like you. And are fun. And will help you down the road.

And on the business side: Learn to delegate. Learn to listen. Make time for your staff. Learn to give effective coaching and feedback. Let people take risks. Offer encouragement and help them grow.

Be nice.

I am married to my wife and my family is job one. (*Explanation:* I can only be great at work if the other pieces of my life are as health as possible - family, health, spiritual, physical, learning, social. Like any garden, they need tending to. I must remind myself about this regularly. I must also support colleagues to tend to their gardens of balance so that they can be as wholesome at work as possible).

People don't care what you think until they know that you care. (*Anecdote:* I grew up watching my father care for the people who worked for him. He owned a manufacturing company whose 235

employees never voted to organize or join a union. Why? As a kid I walked the factory floor with him holding his pant-leg. He would introduce me to every person and tell me something about them. He knew his employees, their families and their challenges. My father gave each employee a hand signed card with a \$20 bill on their birthday and gave them the day off. He surrounded himself with smart(er) people and he did not care who got credit. When my father died, stories about his quiet care of the human element of his company came forward. Countless stories of his behind-the-scenes, stealth largess were shared - helping those in financial crisis with only voluntary expectations for reimbursement; lobbying banks for mortgages and loans (that he sometimes backed); making connections for needed medical care and supplying travel and accommodations; the stories seem endless. Bottom line: he cared for the people who worked for him. They, in turn, were loyal and hard workers who walked with him in good times and bad.

The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. It is easy to fall into the trap of frivolous business. But Stephen Covey points out that for each of us, there should be a main thing - the thing that fuels us, that motivates us, that keeps us engaged and interested in life...or, most importantly, a state of mind. Among an ocean of activities and that forever long "to do" list, we have clear objectives that paramount all others. We must strive to keep the main thing, the main thing. Keep focused. Keep that thesis statement omni present as you complete your essay of work.

A president who understands advancement, appreciates what it takes to be successful, and is willing to get into the trenches and work shoulder-to-shoulder as a member of the advancement team

Regular vigorous exercise (three-five hours per week of cycling, curling or running)

The unconditional love of a dog (preferably a Lab or Golden Retriever)

You can work 24 hours a day, seven days a week and never, ever, be finished. In fact, success brings more work (not less). At the end of every day, balls roll off your desk (to do list) and crash onto the floor. What to do? Choose. Pick what Covey calls the Important and Urgent or the just plain Important even if it isn't urgent and let the other stuff go. Get it done and then go home at a decent hour. Enjoy your family and friends. Enjoy you. You truly can't do it all but you can do what's important extremely well.

That leads me to number two. Learn how to say yes to yourself, yes to mission-critical work (and therefore no to some other people and tasks). We are can-do people, yes people, people pleasers. For most of us, our greatest strengths are our greatest weaknesses. This is a case in point. People like us because we say yes. But too many yeses, get us in trouble. Learn how to say no graciously. Try "Yes, No, Yes" - "Yes, I see why you believe this is important. No, I can't attend to it for several days (until this project is finished) (until I return from this trip) (or I can't attend it, period), but yes, I'll keep you informed of my progress as I get to it." Or ask, "How else might we get this done, because my priorities (our agreed upon priorities) make it impossible at this time. Shall we brainstorm some alternatives?" Or how about, "Why is this so important and why is it more important than (your top priorities)?"

Fight the sitting disease. For every hour we sit, we lose 21.8 minutes off our life. Info-graphic attached. What to do? Stand-up and walk around or in place for every phone call. Stand at meetings. Take the stairs. Park far from the front door. The results? Your voice will have more energy on the phone. Donors will feel your vibrancy. Your staff/team members will follow suit, be more creative, have more energy. You'll feel better and live longer. Can't beat that!

Laugh out loud at least once a day (more if you are able). What and who makes you laugh? Not tee-hee or smile, but belly laughs. Laughter in the office changes the mood, helps you keep things in perspective, reduces tension (unless you're laughing AT someone then it makes things worse).

Continue to be philanthropic, be generous, make your own inspired, joyful, generous gifts of time, treasure and talent. Know the causes you support. Stay connected to the impact you are making every day in the lives of people, animals, in communities, for our planet. Pay back and pay it forward. We all know giving transforms the giver. Continue to live it.

Never be afraid to hire people smarter than you.

Work hard; laugh harder.

Humility plus ambition often equals success.

Seek to determine if a situation calls for laser- or lantern-like focus.

It's unlikely you will ever regret having spent more time in the office.

****Special thanks to our colleagues who shared their "Lessons Learned"***

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