

School Business Leader

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FOR SCHOOL BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS

Volume 3 • Issue 4

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- ▶ CREATE A WINNING CULTURE

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

What Fuels You?

Leaders run dry when they “pour out” more than they “pour in.” You might think you’re Wonder Woman or Superman, but even they have frailties. Igniting and managing energy is the hard stuff of leadership. How can you fuel your energy first to pour in so you can pour out?

Here’s what top leaders say fuels their energy:

- Crisis, challenges, problem solving.
- Delegating to others.
- Mentoring/developing others.
- Vacation, hobbies, leisure.
- Making progress toward goals/accomplishments.
- Money/rewards.
- Reconnecting with purpose—purpose is passion.
- Aiming beyond having a good day; doing more; taking risks.

Adapted from “Top Leaders Explain What Fuels Their Energy,” by Dan Rockwell. Leadership Freak Blog, June 2017. Leadershipfreak.blog. (Creative Commons BY 3.0 License <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>.)



ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIALS
INTERNATIONAL

FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP

Think Outside the Box—7 Ideas for Generating Revenue

School business leaders must regularly make tough decisions to make ends meet, whether it’s laying off staff, eliminating programs, or asking legislators and their local community for additional tax dollars. However, these strategies can only go so far. District leaders must find alternative sources of revenue to keep the lights on and provide students a quality education.

Here are several ideas to help business officials think outside the box and generate new revenue.

- 1. Rent facilities out to various groups.** Rent out gyms, sports fields, and pools to youth/adult leagues. Offer outside groups rentals for meeting rooms, cafeteria space, auditoriums, and other spaces like farm land and cell towers.
- 2. Tap other traditional sources for revenues.** Tap revenues from beverage and vending machine contracts with companies, school picture contracts with photography firms, and by selling projects from building trade classes.
- 3. Provide child care service.** Offer child care programs for extended hours before/after school, during spring/summer breaks, and on

holidays. Charge rates comparable to for-profit child care centers in your area. Also consider tuition-based preschool and kindergarten bridge programs.

- 4. Offer other enrichment activities.** This could include student enrichment classes, summer camps, camps focused on special interests (STEM, etc.), and adult education camps.
- 5. Charge fees for sports/athletic programs.** Implement “pay to play” participation fees for inter-school athletic, intramural, and extracurricular activities.
- 6. Sell rights.** Consider selling naming rights for football stadiums/other sports facilities to corporate sponsors. Sell licensing rights for school logos on athletic clothing to apparel companies, too.
- 7. Sell advertising space.** Sell advertising space in newsletters, program books, report cards, and internal personnel and business forms. Don’t forget about ad space on the district website and school buses, too.

Adapted from “Getting Creative: Alternative Revenue Sources for School Districts,” by Mike Shafer. School Business Affairs, April 2014, pp. 25–27.

HOW DO YOU GENERATE REVENUE?

What innovative strategies has your school district implemented to generate new revenues? Share your story with Elleka Yost, eyost@asbintl.org, and you may be featured in an upcoming issue of *School Business Leader*!

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

7 Steps to Mediate Conflicts

Conflict resolution involves three primary goals: 1) understanding people, how they operate, and how they think; 2) understanding the motivations and insecurities of those involved; and 3) building trust and practical remedies that both parties have faith in. The core component for resolving conflict is trust.

If you've been tasked with mediating a conflict, the first step is to reassure each party that they can speak to you in confidence. Reassure them that you have their best interests at heart, be a good listener, and never gossip behind their back. Great mediators are trusted confidants for everyone, allow each party to vent, and identify and sympathize with each side. Trust in the mediator is key and will help each party steer past their impasses to find a resolution.

Conflict is rarely the result of a single source or incident. The mediator's job is to identify these sources by listening to each party vent. Although venting may seem like a rambling, high-speed data dump, it offers many clues about what's driving the conflict.

To mediate conflict, speak independently with each party (in person) and follow this process:

1. Sympathize and clarify that you're there to listen and understand what happened. Indicate you want a win-win solution for everyone.
2. Ask the party to start at the beginning and share how they believe the conflict happened. Take copious notes.
3. Ask questions and have the party elaborate on individual incidents. Don't judge, simply demonstrate interest in fully understanding the issue.
4. Thank them for their time when you're finished, then meet with

the other party independently and repeat the steps above.

5. Analyze your notes afterwards and search for sources/patterns that are driving the conflict. Patterns likely will fall into one of three areas:
 - **Workflow issues**—holes in how people work together that, when filled, can resolve the conflict (e.g., information and/or resource access, processes, communication issues).
 - **Personal issues**—characteristics, behaviors, or insecurities of an individual that may be playing a role (e.g., anxiety, narcissism, mental health issues).
 - **Interpersonal issues**—characteristics between opposing parties that may be playing a role (e.g., language barriers, unaligned expectations, cultural differences).
6. Meet separately with each party and share what you found. Present conflict sources as issues on both sides. Be empathetic and help each side see their role in driving the conflict, but do so in a non-confrontational way (hint: highlight your own faults to relate to them and prevent anyone from feeling singled out).
7. Try to have everyone meet as a group to resolve the conflict together. Discuss creative ways to address conflict sources and

WHAT HAVE YOU MISSED ON THE NETWORK?

Need an Athletic Trainer?

Are you looking for an athletic trainer or physical therapist for your school district? Do you have tips to help your peers hire a qualified professional to serve student athletes? Log onto ASBO International's professional online community, the Global School Business Network, at asbointl.org/Network, and join the conversation!

One resource you'll find is a request-for-proposal (RFP) template for sports medicine services. The RFP template can be modified to accommodate any district's needs for hiring a service provider. If you need help filling a physical trainer or therapist position in your district, you won't want to miss out on this resource!

patterns. While there's no magical solution, the goal is for all parties to propose ideas and find an agreeable solution that works for everyone.

Adapted from "Conflict Resolution: A Primer," by Jono Bacon. Opensource.com. May 2016. <https://opensource.com>. (Creative Commons BY-SA 4.0 License. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>.)

FAMOUS LEADERS

"Leadership is not about a title or designation. It's about impact, influence, and inspiration. Impact involves getting results, influence is about spreading the passion you have for your work, and you have to inspire teammates and customers."

—Robin S. Sharma, Canadian author and thought leader



Should We Rethink School Transportation?

The new Bellwether Education Partners report, “Miles to Go: Bringing School Transportation into the 21st Century,” states that nearly 500,000 U.S. school buses transport more than 25 million students to school each day—a fleet “more than twice the size of all other forms of mass transit combined.” However, operational inefficiencies drain K–12 budgets and despite technological advances in automobiles, K–12 transportation has remained the same for the past 50 years.

In the report, Bellwether explores why school bus transportation hasn’t changed and whether school transportation systems are meeting student, family, and school needs. Below are some highlights; read the full report at bellwethereducation.org.

1. **School transportation fits into three main models:** 1) district-provided yellow bus services—the most common model whereby districts control transportation services; 2) contracted yellow bus services—the second most common model—operates similar to the district model, but responsibility falls on the contractor; and 3) public transit model—the least common model—found in urban districts where students commute via public transit infrastructure.
2. **The average bus driver earns \$14.70/hr.** U.S. schools employ over 500,000 bus drivers, who are required to have a commercial driver’s license (CDL), undergo drug/alcohol testing, and receive extensive training. Bus drivers earn less than other CDL drivers (\$19.31/hr. on average), which partially explains why districts struggle with driver shortages.
3. **Transportation funding fits into three structures, but varies by state:** 1) cost-based

reimbursement—states reimburse districts based on an estimated-cost formula or portion of actual costs; 2) per-capita reimbursement—states provide a set funding level per student, adjusted based on fuel costs, district geographic characteristics, etc.; and 3) mileage-based reimbursement—funding is based on the number of miles traveled or by “linear density,” the number of miles traveled per student, adjusted by economies-of-scale differences between urban/rural districts.

4. **Insufficient funding incentivizes districts to be efficient, but they’re hindered by other factors.** Regardless of structure, state funding rarely covers the full cost of K–12 transportation, which encourages districts to seek efficiencies. But, districts are hindered by state/federal bus laws and regulations, student eligibility requirements to receive transportation services, and limited vehicle options.

Contracting out allows districts to delegate operations and may save money, but doesn’t always address efficiency. Outsourcing can address vehicle use, staffing, and maintenance inefficiencies, but not necessarily school choice, siting, and bell schedules, which affect transportation requirements.

5. **“Data deficits” prevent districts from achieving efficiencies.** Most bus fleets aren’t up to speed with other mass transit technologies, so districts are not equipped with information that could help maximize efficiency (e.g., cost per ride, percent of seat capacity utilized, length of ride times, etc.) Most buses lack GPS technology to track them, even though parents want this technology to ensure greater

FROM THE WATERCOOLER

During the production of this issue of School Business Leader, Patrick sent off applications for the 2017 Emerging School Business Leaders Scholarship, which offers new school business leaders a chance to receive an all-expenses paid trip to the 2017 Annual Meeting & Expo. (Learn more at asbointl.org/Scholarship.) Meanwhile, Siobhán enjoyed a visit from her brother, who lives in the Cayman Islands!

student safety (by knowing the child’s location/status) and provide more timely bus service. Technology can measure everything from ridership data to gasoline usage to inform more efficient bus routing, but as one transportation manager said, “you can’t manage what you don’t measure.”

Bellwether concludes that while school buses provide the safest student transportation option, these services come at a great cost. States often restrict districts’ ability to explore alternative transportation models while failing to fully fund school transportation services.

The report recommends that districts invest in data collection/technology to improve transportation efficiency. Districts may also want to work with state policymakers to revise transportation funding structures and remove regulations preventing districts from responding to student transportation needs.

Finally, Bellwether asks an important question: Should districts be responsible for school transportation at all? Would this task be better managed by a new regional entity that can absorb the costs and achieve efficiencies that districts can’t?

Adapted from “Miles to Go: Bringing School Transportation into the 21st Century,” by Philip Burgoyne-Allen and Jennifer O’Neal Schiess. Bellwether Education Partners. May 2017. Bellwethereducation.org. (Creative Commons License, creativecommons.org.)

TEAM LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Want a Winning Culture? Focus on Your Team

John Keyser, leadership expert and founder of Common Sense Leadership, says that the pathway to building and maintaining a “winning culture” requires building a true team where everyone helps one another, is happy, and focuses on the positive.

Even though teams should concentrate on the positive, Keyser says they should also permit respectful disagreement; in fact, this is desirable—the best ideas are those that are built upon. Leaders should aim to create a culture whereby people debate respectfully and come to an agreement, and everyone leaves the room supportive of the decision.

If they want excited, appreciative people who truly care about doing their best individually and as a team, leaders must first model humility, honesty, courage, and genuine care for their teammates. Only then can leaders expect their team to embody those principles.

Keyser says, “We only want a team member who respects and trusts

every other team member. If he does not, he must leave, no matter how talented he is, as he will drag down the team, preventing them from functioning to their full capacity.”

A winning culture emphasizes that everyone has a shared responsibility for success, particularly for providing outstanding service, client satisfaction, growth, and support for one another. There is nothing equal to the power of a true team in business.

Keyser encourages leaders to focus on the positive by letting their staff know that they are appreciated and valued. Leaders should be visible and spend time with their people; they should ask staff how they can help, listen to their ideas, and discover what lessons staff are learning from clients. Leaders must be fully present, sincerely listening to understand and learn. They must also follow through—which is key to strengthening respect, trust, and rapport.

Developing a winning culture means investing in people; leaders must help their team learn, grow, and succeed. This does not need to be a big expense, and can take the form of teaching, mentoring, and coaching. Regardless, everyone should understand that they are in a “people business” and improve their

relationship and listening skills so that they may become great teammates and boost morale.

Leaders ought to be intentional with offering feedback, affirming good work, and giving timely and constructive feedback to help their teammates be the best version of themselves. They must also quickly address problems, as letting things fester creates stress and discord, and is unfair to the team. When leaders fail to resolve problems, they lose respect, and team effort, morale, and productivity suffer.

Keyser warns business leaders: “where we find ourselves in trouble is when we are focused on managing and cutting costs, with our noses in spreadsheets and taking our people for granted, not asking for their ideas or demonstrating our appreciation.”

This behavior drags the culture down and makes people lose heart when the organization loses sight of its original vision and purpose. Happy people do better work, and leaders focus on people while managers focus on numbers. Highly effective leaders help others do great work, and sustainable success is only achievable through the power of teams.

Adapted from “Developing a Winning Culture,” by John Keyser. Common Sense Leadership. April 2017. Commonsenseleadership.com.

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