



# **Dave Mitchell**

## **the Leadership Difference**

### *Laugh and Learn!*

**May 2014**

### **Learning and Leading**

Among the many wonderful contributions teachers make to our development is a subtle but critical leadership quality: they model techniques for the transfer of learning. I examine the link between learning and leading in this newsletter, the importance of choosing your approach to life and enjoy solving a wine mystery that involves three different countries. Enjoy!

#### **Did You Learn to Lead at the Age of Seven?**

Childhood development experts tend to point to the ages of 4 - 10 as critical for learning the fundamental building blocks of education otherwise known as "Reading, Writing and Arithmetic." During these important years children develop their academic foundation, not just because they learn how to navigate these three pillars of knowledge, but they also learn how to learn. Knowing how people learn is critical to being an effective leader. And, just like "reading, writing and arithmetic" are the critical components to knowledge, there are three elements to learning: Absorb, Connect, Apply.

Learning begins with a step called "Absorb." In order to learn anything, you must first pay attention. Any leader who has ever conducted a meeting and then two days later answered the exact questions addressed in that meeting knows that being present when information is shared is not enough to qualify as absorbing the information. To lead means to deliver information in a variety of ways (visually, audibly and kinesthetically) to best ensure that the recipient is truly engaged in active listening.

I spent two years "absorbing" high school Spanish. My primary reason for taking Spanish was because most of the cheerleaders were in that class. I paid attention enough to get the grades necessary to pass the course. Still, my knowledge of Spanish is pretty much limited to "hola, que pasa" and "muy poquito," the latter being my exaggeration when someone asks me if I speak Spanish. The problem was, I didn't "connect" learning Spanish to anything in my life. I grew up in rural Illinois where no one spoke Spanish so I didn't see the knowledge as that important, a mistake I would regret some years later. As leaders, if we share information with our team without helping them connect the importance of it to their jobs or life in general, they will not likely learn anything. When a leader tells a team member something without connecting it to their life, they have essentially engaged in the tried and failed method of parenting called, "Because I said so." "Connect" is the second step of the learning process.

My lovely bride loves to watch Food Network. She is an exceptional cook and enjoys learning new recipes and techniques. I often watch the shows, too. I think to myself, "That would be very cool to learn how to do." At that moment, I have completed two thirds of the learning process. I have absorbed what the show is presenting and I have connected its value to my life. Unfortunately, I rarely actually try to apply that information by doing it. Without practicing the skills that I have absorbed and connected, I don't learn them. A leader, when teaching their team, must include opportunities for them to demonstrate their abilities in a safe environment that allows for mistakes and constructive coaching. Many training sessions include the first two steps but fail to complete the transfer of learning by allowing the participants to apply what they have just absorbed and connected.

The same approach you used to learn your alphabet, multiplication tables and read "See Spot Run;" the process of transforming information into knowledge, works for effective leadership. Make sure you create a learning environment in which team members can absorb, connect and apply what you share.

### **From Our Blog: Choose a Good Delusion**

On one of my recent flights, I had an interesting experience. We were boarding the flight and I was in the very first row (bulk head), aisle seat. Because I have literally flown over one million miles on United, I was one of the first to board. Eventually, the gentleman in the window seat boarded the plane. I jumped up to accommodate him. Unfortunately, there was no overhead baggage space available for him to stow his bag so he had to go a couple of rows back to find a spot for his luggage.

If you have ever found yourself two rows behind your seat during the airplane boarding process, you know how hard it is to "swim upstream" back to your seat. It is also hard for the boarding passengers to squeeze by the rogue salmon headed against the current. To accommodate him and avert the bottle neck for the boarding passengers, I decided to stand in the aisle so he could stow his bag and return to his seat. The woman behind me literally tried to crawl around me. I said, "Hold on just a second, (motioning toward the other passenger) he's going to have to come back this way." The woman continued trying to shove her body and bags passed me. "If you can wait just a second, it will be easier once he returns up here."

"Why are you blocking me?" the woman said aggressively, just as the man returned to the front row and took his seat. [For more, click here!](#)



**To all our wonderful clients and friends (many of whom are the same folks!), thank you for enriching our lives.  
*Laugh and Learn!***

### **Wine Twins, but not Identical**

For years Americans laid claim to Zinfandel as our grape.

Research indicates that the earliest of vines were planted in the 1800s.

One problem. It turns out that the Italian grape Primitivo is a genetic match and has been grown there since the 18th century.

The plot thickened in 2001 when both grapes were discovered to be apparent descendants of the Crljenak Kastelanski grape from Croatia (good luck marketing that wine!). It wouldn't be surprising if there remains another twist to the gnarly vines of this grapes ancestry.

I love both Zinfandel and Primitivo. The latter has a tad more character and earthiness to my taste.

Primitivo is most associated with the Puglia region of Italy but California wine makers are producing some lovely versions, too. Look for bottles from Feudi DI San Marzano, Tormaresca and A-Mano from Italy. Hendry, Soda Rock and Uvaggio are making wonderful versions in California. The next time you are having a meat lasagna or spaghetti and meatballs, pour a glass of Primitivo and ponder the mystery of its origins.

