

Lend a Hand

The Strand

The Newsletter of PRLS

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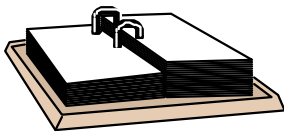
July 1, 2003

PRLS Calendar

July 19 MPRLS 4; Nelson Room, CLU, Thousand Oaks

August 16 MPRLS 3, SLO County

September 20 Basic PRLS
Bakersfield



September 27 MPRLS 4 SLO County

October 24 (Friday) Basic PRLS
City of San Luis Obispo (before District Conference)



Why Go To PRLS?

Dr. Ed Pope (Westlake Village)

For those who've never been to PRLS, I strongly recommend it. PRLS, which stands for Potential Rotary Leadership Seminars, was started over a decade ago by Rotarians in our District who believed that the future success of our clubs and District would depend largely upon having leaders with *leadership skills*! Wow, what a concept! PRLS has since evolved into an invaluable training program, not just for future Rotary leaders but also for leaders in civic and business environs.

Just the other day, I was talking to a friend of mine who's

active in city affairs in a nearby town. He was complaining to me that he could never schedule anything after certain meetings because he didn't know when they were going end. "You don't know when they're going to end?" I asked incredulously. "No, they can go on for quite a while, depending upon what people want to discuss," he replied. I told him that this was absurd.

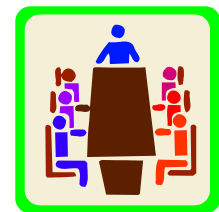
A good meeting chair would never allow this. Even if the participants are undisciplined, it's up to the chair to keep the meeting on schedule (He later informed me that *he* was the meeting chair!). I then launched into many of the lessons of PRLS, with particular emphasis on how to run a meeting. I even told him that one Rotarian I know has been known to walk out of a meeting at its scheduled ending time regardless of whether the meeting had actually ended (Some readers will guess correctly *who* that might be).

The following night he called me to tell me about a meeting he had presided over earlier in the evening. It lasted the *scheduled* two hours and not a minute longer! So I asked him what he did. When people would digress, he said, he'd get them back on track or shut them down entirely. When non-agenda topics would be brought up, he tabled them for either "new business" at

the end of the meeting, or he scheduled them for next month's agenda.

Even without having taken PRLS, my friend (and his committee) benefited from the advice of someone who had.

In so many countless ways, the leadership skills learned in PRLS and Master PRLS have benefited not only my Rotary life, but also my personal, business, and civic life. Whether it's public speaking, running a meeting, leadership principles, or communications (such as editing a website, bulletin, or newsletter), the lessons taught in PRLS are tremendous!



Why go to PRLS? Simple. Unless you're either the greatest leader around or you don't plan on leading anything—any group, any meeting, any organization—EVER in your lifetime, then you can benefit from PRLS and Master PRLS. I know I did—immensely.



From the website—**Picking the Same Old Crew to Lead**

What kind of leader lets the same old crew lead the same old events the same way every year? I'll tell you – it's a leader who doesn't want to take chances with the status quo. If a long string of leaders lets Charlie be the Secretary for twenty years, then woe befall the president who comes along desiring to make a change. There'll be a mutiny in the club. "Ah, you really hurt Charlie's feelings. He wants to be part of the club, and you just told him 'I don't like what you've been doing and don't want you as the secretary during my administration.'"

Is that a good idea? Sure it is. Count on it—Charlie's going to do things his way ("Presidents come and go, but I'm always here to see that the club runs right!"), and you won't have anything to say about how the position is handled. The Secretary is one of the six club officers that must be elected by the club. Properly done, the person holding the Secretary's position can *make* a club, because in many clubs the organizational force and institutional knowledge is held by the Secretary. Indeed, in many clubs in the world, holding the Secretary's position successfully is considered *the* steppingstone to the presidency. If you don't see the Secretary's position as anything more than a steppingstone to redundancy, change the name associated with the job!

Here's another situation: The same old fund-raiser has been going along for 25 years, making money every year, and while the chair changes every year (because being the chair is a piece of cake), the subordinate labor-intensive positions are held every year by the same people. Is that a good idea? Sure it is, provided that the subordinate positions are staffed by at least two club people, so that when one person gets tired of doing the work year after year (or dies, or moves away, or quits the club in a tiff, or "loses it"), there's another one ready to step in.

You just *have* to get new people involved in club activities in meaningful ways. What can you do if all the old people hold all the jobs?

1. Make sure everyone has a backup.
2. Pick the backups with eventual succession in mind.
3. If the backups do well, move them to other positions of responsibility, then get new backups.

These three steps require a *great* degree of inter-year cooperation and some degree of conscientious personnel management. How does that get done?

That's a later article.

Trust Your Instincts

Most of us didn't hop off the turnip truck just yesterday morning. Most of us have seen a thing or two, been disappointed a time or two,

been let down by others once or twice. In large part, we don't need large numbers of people telling us, "Watch your step!"

We mostly already know that if something smells bad, looks funny, sounds weird or causes us to lose sleep at night, we should just take another look to make sure it's what we first thought it was (or wasn't).

Our instincts, combined with our worldly experience, can prevent us and our clubs from walking off yet more cliffs.

Does that mean we don't ever take a chance on something new? Not at all. It means, "Take another look." And then it means, "Go with your instincts."


Innovators

This has two parts—"Protect Innovators", and "Protect Yourself From Innovators." First things first.

Protect Innovators

Have you ever been around people for whom laws and rules were just barely guidelines? Everything you could think of to do, they had a better way, or had a way to make your plan better. Fully half their ideas didn't work, and some were barely legal, but the half that did work improved the status quo beyond all attempts to leave it alone. If you can somehow find a balance between encouraging the innovators and protecting the organization from their bad ideas, you will surely find some gold amidst the dross,

and the organization will be the better for it.

Protect Yourself From Innovators

The other side of that face, the one that Marlon Brando “seen the other side of,” is that, knowing only intellectually of rules, laws and boundaries, innovators can drive you nuts! You have something that works? Their plan is better. You have a job being done? Their ideas are so much better (read that *different*) that what you had in mind sucks! Big time! Your organization has rules and procedures? Forget that, Man! Those are for the old folks! Let’s do this! And this! And this!

Anyone who has any regard, not to mention reverence, for tradition or for structure has to avoid innovators with both feet, because the innovator will knock all that “old stuff” into a cocked hat, then race off in search of something else to change (read that *improve*).

Innovators mostly can’t be selected to be leaders because they’re incapable of measuring and reacting appropriately to public opinion. Furthermore, some of them – the worst — are incapable of leaving some things alone while attacking entire edifices.

By all means, protect the innovators; just keep an eye to windward for the possibility of approaching storms.



Don’t Be a Perfectionist

Leaders who are unable to accept very good, but not perfect, solutions to tough problems tend to drive their people nuts. Leaders have to understand that perfection isn’t often possible, and that in many cases, “the perfect is the enemy of the good.”

Does that mean that a leader is not allowed to have any reasonable

standards of performance toward which he/she can expect the members to aspire? Of course it doesn’t! Does it mean that a leader has to accept sloppy staff work from members who give the club token effort and minimum time? No, it doesn’t. It *does* mean a leader had better be darned careful what is said to and about those who let down the club team, or the leader is going to end up in three bad spots:

1. People will never finish anything, because they’ll know that whatever they do wrong or incompletely will be picked up by the leader.

2. People will never volunteer for anything, because they’ll know that there isn’t enough time in this world to make things totally perfect for someone who’ll take them apart for giving jobs what they can, instead of what they’re capable of.

3. You will end up writing your own bulletin, planning your own programs, putting on your own parties, then complaining that you “have to do everything.”

Now, reading this little bit might take thirty seconds; it might take a full minute to dismiss this because “it doesn’t pertain to me.” It *does*; it pertains to all Rotarians who, every once in a while, go a little ballistic when someone else lets us down by not giving to an assigned task touches of inspiration and sweat.

Move on; remember who let you down, and in the future don’t give that person anything having the same degree of difficulty. Also, don’t give him/her any serious flack about letting you suffer with the results of inattention. Move on.



Want to be an in-print author? Send your “Strand” contributions by e-mail to rbb717@adelphia.net.

PRLS Registrar **Diane Galvin** (PP, Moorpark) asks that those in receipt of the printed version of this newsletter send her your updated e-mail address.

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