



# The Central Role of Management and Administration in Extension and Experiment Stations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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# The Envy of the World The Land-Grant Universities

Experiment Stations & Extension



## Experiment Station & Extension A Nationwide Network

- USDA-National Institute for Food & Agriculture
- 100+ land-grant colleges and universities
- 3150 counties

**You can't make this  
stuff up!**

Without infrastructure support there is no organization – or no success!

- Facilities
- Finances
- Reporting
- Human Resources

# Continuously Adding Expectations

- New initiatives –
- Every retirement/resignation brings a shifting of work to existing staff
- The result is some staff feeling
  - Stressed, burnt out, overwhelmed, fatigued, resentful, inadequate, unappreciated, undervalued...

## Continuously Adding Expectations

- What of this sounds familiar to you?
- How is this happening in your organization?

# Reality

- Intense competition for available funding
  - Internal University funding
  - USDA-NIFA – political uncertainties
  - Federal grants
  - Greater reliance on contracts and fee for service
  - Development

**We are tuition driven institutions**



# Reality

- Experiment Station & Extension are tax supported entities generally well received by elected officials BUT no new funding is forthcoming
- Must maintain mission with diminished resources
- Must secure what funds we still receive

## Reality

- As administrators and managers you must:
  - Perform essential duties
  - Lead teams of staff
  - Train, teach and mentor others
  - Be the interface that provides accountability
    - external & internal

# Reality

- Workforce has changed:
  - More temporary employees
  - Non-tenure track faculty
  - Soft-money positions
  - Additional accountability
  - More variables require more work!

# Reality

- Faculty compliance with organizational expectations is volunteer management!
- Challenge is to empower and educate faculty not enable bad behavior
  - Faculty as managers

# Reality

- What would you add?
- What is not true in your organization?
- What have you/your organization done to counter act some of these realities?

How much is  
enough?

## What is your role?

- **Do you perpetuate our culture of 24/7/365**
- Email when most people are asleep
- Perform multiple jobs
- Work every day (weekends, nights)
- Check your phone every 10 minutes

## Let's Be Honest

- The future will be financially challenging
- The needs of our customers will always be greater than our ability to respond
- We are not displaying the characteristics of sustainable organizations
- We are unable to answer “How much is enough?”
- Younger workers have different values



## The Invitation

- To be a nimble, flexible organization able to adapt to the needs of our citizens
- To be an organization where employees achieve a balance of work and life outside of our jobs that is positive, sustainable and rewarding

**What kind of  
leader do you  
want to be?**

How do you succeed as a  
leader, operational manager  
and agent of change?

- How would your customers describe your unit or team?
- How would your customers describe your service?

## **The Customer is changing:**

- More people connect to UMaine Cooperative Extension by a smartphone per month then walk into all of our county offices in a year!

# Focus on communication

- Communication skills are the #1 attribute of an effective administrator
- Relationship building, being a people person, being trustworthy, acting with integrity,
- Relationships require investing in other people

“People need to know  
that you care before  
they care about what  
you know”

Dr. Vincent Covello, Center for Risk Communication



## Email:

“I can’t make it to today’s meeting because my son is sick and my husband is out of town. I will try to email the report that’s due by noon. I’m really sorry to miss the meeting. I’m available by cell phone if you need to talk with me.”

## Response

“Thanks for your message. It would be great if you could get the report to us this morning. Can you send it by 11:00 as we really need it? I’ll call you at 10:30 to see how it’s going. Sorry about your son.”

## Response

I'm so sorry to hear about Andy. I hope that he's feeling better soon. I'm sure this is a stressful time with Bob out of town. While it would be great to get the report, please know we will be fine without it for today. Get some rest yourself and I hope everything goes well today.

- Which one would you want to receive?
- Which one would you more likely send?

## Communication

- What is your unit or organizational culture regarding communication?
- What changes could be made?
- What are the likely results of these changes?

Do you thoughtfully respond  
or emotionally react?

- How do you want your dean/director to interact with you?
- Model the behavior you want to see others exhibit

**Never assign a task if you  
wouldn't do yourself**



Invest in people  
Celebrate  
everything! Acknowledge  
everything  
Let everyone know what's  
important

## Investing in People

- What are you and others in your organization doing that is working well?
- What could be changed?

# Focus on control

How much control do you  
need over your area of  
responsibility?

# Perfectionist

- Do you strive for excellence or want perfection?
- Perfectionists drain organizational energy and resources

~~Perfectionists~~

**Do you think of your team as  
your colleagues or your staff?**



Do you delegate projects and trust the outcome or do you assign tasks and monitor progress?

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**IT DEPENDS!**

- What you say matters
- ***What you do matters more***

- Employees work hardest in pursuit of their own ideas
- How are you empowering your team to generate new ideas?

## Peter Block – Organizational Consultant & Author

- What are we trying to create?
- What is the possibility that I stand for?
- What promises am I willing to make?
- What's the promise I'm willing to make that constitutes a risk or major shift for me?
- What gifts do I have that I'm holding in exile?
- What is the harsh reality I'm facing now?
- What commitment am I willing to make?

- A person may forget what you say but they will never forget how you made them feel
- Facts influence feelings and feelings are often what people use to make decisions

# Leading, coaching, managing a team

The most valuable assets in a University are the people and the intellectual capital they have.



How are you building the  
capacity of others?

- Require everyone have a professional development plan
- Suggest relevant professional development activities
- Provide funding for staff development

# Focus on Sustainability

## Personal Sustainability Project

- 2012 initiated two-year project with two goals
- Support successful staff that does excellent work
- Support an organizational climate that supports the pursuit of work-life balance and personal sustainability

- What are the best management practices that you implement to make yourself more sustainable?
- What are the sustainability practices your team implements?

- Successful managers and administrators are essential for the future of the Experiment Stations and Cooperative Extension
- Successful managers and administrators support others and are supported!

What will you take from this  
session back to your  
organization?

# Thank you

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