

**National Association of REALTORS®
2007 Leadership Summit
Aug. 16-17, 2007
Chicago Sheraton Hotel and Towers**

Dick Gaylord “How to Be a Great Leader”

Diana

There have certainly been times when I would have liked to have known the secrets of being a great leader. So, please welcome back our 2008 NAR President, Dick Gaylord. [Applause.] Dick will share with you all the wisdom and the tips that we're going to need.

Dick Gaylord

Thanks, Diana and Mark. They really are doing a great job, aren't they? Let's give them one more round of applause.

[Applause.]

Have you all enjoyed the Leadership Summit today?

[Applause.]

I know I certainly have. Can I ask you what your favorite part of the day was? Just shout it out. Michael? Moe Veissi?

[Laughter.]

It sounds like you just about enjoyed everything and that's really good. We've tried to make the Summit as interactive as possible, and I certainly hope we haven't given you too much for your money. You know, when I began talking about this Summit, I suggested I wanted to add a few things, a few hours to the Summit, and I got a few phone calls. And people said, "You know, the Summit's perfect, don't touch it. Why would anyone want to add or do anything differently?" And I thought for a moment, and I thought, you know, if it's not broken, maybe we should break it. So in any event, I hope we *have* given you enough today and I hope you have enjoyed it.

Last afternoon and evening I noticed as I bumped into some people in the hallways, they were asking me how I felt – are you nervous, and this sort of thing. And I thought about that awhile, and I thought, how could one be with 1,400 of their best friends and be uncomfortable? So for me you've made the day wonderful and I thank you for that.

[Applause.]

You know, just all the many kindnesses, the kind words from so many of you today. The reflections on our visits in the past mean so much to me. And I want to just give you one example of this great organization and all of you. I decided yesterday morning that I wanted to run my talks by a member; and somebody I didn't know well, perhaps someone who wasn't on the staff. And I had met Jeff Young, the incoming President of Michigan, at a President-elect's breakfast. So Jeff spent the day, listened to all the talks and gave me some good advice, and Jeff, I really appreciate you. Thank you so much.

[Applause.]

And lastly, some of you have come up to me this afternoon and have said, "Have you switched ties?" And I've looked at them, and I looked at you. And I have switched ties, but I want to tell you the story. [Laughs.] Yesterday, when we were preparing for this, they told me before I arrived to bring a whole bunch of ties that, when you're on screen, sometimes some ties are almost not visible or don't show up well. I was so nervous about it, I went out and bought a couple of ties. Well, this was my favorite tie. But they said last evening, really doesn't work well. But I thought about it all day, and I thought, you know, I'm going upstairs, I'm bringing that tie down and I'm wearing it this afternoon. So I hope you can appreciate it.

[Applause.]

Those of you who have been to the Leadership Summits in previous years will remember that the incoming president usually speaks only once. When I was thinking about this year's Summit, and I spent a lot of time thinking about it, I felt it was important for me to do more than just talk about our theme and goals for the year.

I really wanted to sit down with all of you and share some personal reflections on leadership. These aren't things I came up with on my own — quite the opposite. There are things that I've learned from my experiences and from the many great people I've met over the course of my lifetime. Some of the lessons were easy for me, and others I had to learn the hard way. I hope by sharing them with you today, we will all become better leaders and a better team.

The first lesson I've learned is an obvious one: Smile throughout every conversation, especially with members. Of course, the impact a smile can have on others is something we all learn at a young age, even before we talk. But as we get older, we often forget how important nontraditional communication is. Early in my career, I decided to market my services to For Sale By Owners. I put together this beautiful letter and package of materials. I mailed it out to every single FSBO as soon as the listings expired.

To my surprise, I wasn't getting any responses. Yet another agent in my office, who wrote a very poor letter full of misspellings and plenty of other errors, was getting all

sorts of business. I just couldn't understand why. Later, I found out he was hand-carrying his letter to the owners the same day their listings expired. By the time MY letters got there three days later, my competitor had already met with the owners face-to-face.

A couple of years ago when I joined the NAR Leadership Team as the first Vice President, I was again reminded of the importance of nonverbal communication. I had the opportunity to do some speech training and presentation training with Nan Tolbert, who you heard from this morning. And as Nan explained to me, there are three elements of communication: words, voice, and nonverbal gestures. She asked me to guess how much each of these contributed to the overall success of any communication.

I was surprised when she told me that words mattered least of the three, only seven percent. And while tone and voice and inflection were important, they accounted for 38% percent. It was nonverbal gestures that carried the weight of the message, a full 55%. Smiling is one of the easiest nonverbal ways to show people that you're listening, that you appreciate their thoughts. It conveys a positive feeling, and studies show that smiling can even make you feel better. Now, whenever I rehearse a talk, I ask people to watch me to make sure I'm smiling. And when I'm speaking with members and staff, I always try to smile when I greet them, and as much as possible throughout the conversation. For me, it really does make a big difference. So I'm going to ask you, try it tonight and see what happens.

The second lesson I learned also has to do with nonverbal communication, and this is hard for REALTORS: listen 95% of the time and speak 5% of the time. When I began in this business I had just left the university where I had been teaching real estate courses. I thought I was a hot shot, only to realize I didn't put one sale together my entire first year. I was too busy talking and not listening. I may have been communicating my thoughts clearly, but I didn't have a clue what my clients wanted.

When I started listening more than I talked, I began doing lots of business. Now, no matter how busy my day is, I make it a point to listen, and listen a lot. Even when I'm leading a discussion, I'll stop and ask a question to give others an opportunity to give their thoughts. The Town Hall tomorrow is based upon this principle. The leadership team and I want to hear from you, and I hope that you're going to submit those questions. Please don't forget: do it before you leave this afternoon. We're going to read them all, even those that we may not have time to answer tomorrow.

When it comes to listening, it's also important to listen to what I call the "Voice of David." Most of you are probably familiar with the story of David and Goliath from the Bible. While the adults in the story were considering all the gizmos with which to fight giant Goliath, David was dismissed as a little kid with a slingshot. In the end, however, the punk kid was right.

There is a tradition in the Benedictine monasteries that follows this same principle. When a decision has to be made, the Abbot, who is the head of the monastery, asks each

monk's opinion. He always starts with the youngest monk, and the order is intentional. Whenever I've made a good decision, it's usually because I've listened to the voice of David. And when I've made a poor decision, it's because I haven't taken the time to listen. I encourage all of you to listen, and particularly to the new voices in your association. They have so much to offer. And if you are a new AE or President, don't be shy. We want to hear from you tomorrow and throughout 2008.

The third lesson I want to share is, convince every member that you value their input, and DO value it. NAR Strategic Planning Committee provides an excellent example of how to do this well. During the past few years, NAR Strategic Planning Committee has sought out more input than ever before from a wide range of members and staff. We even brought in some younger members with different perspectives on our industry, and we asked them where we should be headed. The Committee even asked all the other Committee chairs to evaluate how their individual Committee's goals fit in with NAR's objectives.

And they invited specific Committee chairs and liaisons to the mid-year Strategic Planning Committee in Washington, DC to get their feedback on NAR's plan. To make sure the plan stays relevant, the Committee also has invited industry leaders, as well as state and local AE's, to participate in what we call an Industry-Wide Environmental Scan. And this information is going to be absolutely vital as we evaluate and revise the plan in the months, and in the years, ahead. As a result of this broad input, the strategic objectives in our plan better reflect the needs of this organization and provide clear direction for all of us. I want to recognize two outstanding past Chairs of our Strategic Planning Committee who are with us today. They are Scott Bradley and Moe Veissi. Please stand, we'd like to recognize you.

[Applause.]

Thanks for your great work.

We've distributed to all of you the current strategic plan which was approved last November, and I hope that it assists you in developing your goals in your states and local associations, and in preparing your own strategic plans. The 2008 Strategic Plan will be finalized this November in Las Vegas, and you'll get a copy shortly after that.

I encourage all of you to follow a similar approach as you begin to plan for your year for 2008. Please make a conscious effort to go back and talk with your members about the strategic objectives we spoke about earlier today, and seek input from all areas of the association, especially from members who don't ordinarily participate. And when they make a suggestion, give it full consideration even if you don't necessarily agree. As I said earlier, we are in this all together. The more ideas we have, the more we share, the more successful we will all be.

The fourth lesson I've learned is directly related to the third: Don't ask for someone else's opinion if you've already made up your mind. How many times have you ever been

asked to give input on a project, and felt that the person asking only wanted you to confirm what they'd already thought, that they had already made up their minds? Raise your hands. Did you feel like you were a part of the team? Probably not.

I think every one of us has experienced this situation, some of us more than once. And some of us have probably done it a time or two ourselves, only to get a suggestion we didn't want, but really couldn't ignore. If you've already made up your mind about something, asking for input can lead people to think that you're dishonest and insincere. So ask for input only when you truly want it, and be sure to consider it objectively.

At the same time, I encourage all of you to provide input on key decisions that affect your members. So many times we make decisions in our Committees, at the Board of Directors meetings, with very little input or objection from others. Then, after a program or initiative is approved or implemented, people say they disagree. If you don't agree with something, get involved in that program and be a part of the solution. And once all of the input is provided and a decision is made, honor that decision even if it's not exactly what you wanted. That's what being a part of a team is all about.

Lesson five really gets to the heart of our theme for the year. We absolutely must find a spot for everyone who wants to be involved in the Association. When I was elected President of the Long Beach District Board of REALTORS in 1987, my mother had a heart-to-heart-conversation with me. And she said, "Dick, when you began in the Board of REALTORS, you sat in the back of the room. Your presidency is going to go by very quickly and you're going to be back in the back of the room, so do a great job, include everyone — everyone is an equal member of the organization."

My mother was always right. Every member of this Association has something important to contribute, and today's beginners are tomorrow's leaders. We need to encourage more members to participate in every manner possible. So if a member or a staff person in your area expresses even the slightest interest in participation, I ask you to help them apply their ideas and talents. Find a place for them so that they, too, can be more involved.

The final lesson I want to share with you comes from one of NAR's most memorable and dynamic leaders, our 2001 President, Richard Mendenhall. A few years ago, Richard addressed a group of Association executives, and the title of this conversation was "Where Have all the Leaders Gone?" Richard pointed out the ongoing need to recruit new leaders, and he said that current leaders must play a significant role in that recruitment. Richard has recruited many NAR leaders, including one very special recruit who is here with us today, his daughter, Elizabeth Mendenhall. Elizabeth, would you stand?

[Applause.]

Elizabeth will serve as Liaison to the Association Leadership in 2008, and I encourage all of you to get to know her. I am certain you will admire her as much as I do. Thank you for being here.

[Applause.]

Over the years, one thing I've learned is this: that if you show members that you are involved and deeply care about the organization and all those we serve, they will feel the same way. In fact, Richard's passion for this organization certainly made me more passionate about the organization and about being involved in leadership, and he contributed to my decision to run for elected office, as he has contributed to the decisions of many people sitting in this room. If your members need a little more encouragement to get involved, just tell them about the benefits you've experienced in being a leader. At the end of the day, people will remember how they personally and professionally benefited from your leadership, and that will encourage them to follow in your footsteps.

If there is one underlying premise to all the lessons I've shared with you today, it's the importance of communication. Earlier this month, I attended the Real Estate Connect Conference in San Francisco, which is sponsored by the In the News Group. Everyone there was talking about communication. Contrary to the belief, people are not using technology to avoid or limit communication. They are actually looking for more personal communication online. This is one of the reasons blogs are so popular. Yet, even when it comes to talking on the Web, the same principles of effective communication apply; it should be positive, it should be open, it should be sincere, and it should be objective.

I think the lessons I've shared today can help us all apply these principles to our communications with members, consumers, and with each other. And I look forward to learning some lessons from all of you in the coming year.

I want to leave you today with one final thought about leadership that has inspired me for many years. It's called a true leader. A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader, but becomes one by the quality of his actions and the integrity of his intent. In the end, leaders are like eagles — they don't flock, you find them one at a time.

I never imagined that I would be standing here with such an amazing team of great leaders. I feel fortunate to be serving alongside of each and every one of you, and I thank you again for making this such a distinguished team, Team 2008. All together, I am so confident that we will soar to new heights in 2008 and beyond, and I thank you for being with us today.

Mark

Dick, thank you so much for those inspirational words of wisdom. I don't think there is anything that can top that.