

**National Association of REALTORS®
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Tim Kent and Sharon Millet “Leadership Roles, Responsibilities, and Partnership”

Diana

Next up, we have a very dynamic duo. These two are sure to keep the energy up. Sharon Millet is with Coldwell Banker, Millet Realty in Auburn, Maine, and past president of NAR.

Mark

And Tim Kent is Executive President of the North Carolina Association of REALTORS. Together they will explore leadership roles and responsibilities, and how we can work effectively with staff and volunteers so that our members are better served. Please welcome Sharon and Tim.

Sharon

Well, Tim, I don't know, the Dynamic Duo, they didn't give us capes. What do you think?

Tim

No, no capes. I left my mask up in the room.

Sharon

All right.

Tim

You know, they said there were going to be a lot of people here. They were right. You've been a state president.

Sharon

Yes.

Tim

1985, State of Maine. You were also the NAR president in 1999. You've probably spoken to some large groups like this before. What's the worst thing that ever happened to you as a volunteer leader?

Sharon

Oh, Tim. As a volunteer leader, the worst? Okay, I'm going to admit this in front of 1,400 people, right? Okay, it's all about food for me. [*Laughter.*] Now I come from Maine. We're not gourmet eaters. We eat pretty plain and simple. But, you know, we're not country bumpkins either. But I found in travels for NAR, when we were representing the National Association of REALTORS in foreign countries, my worst moments were all about wonderful people in wonderful countries hosting us to incredible dinners, but some of the things we were served were – *tchk*.

So I've had raw whale blubber in Norway. It's pink. It looks like flesh, just like you might imagine. I've had, in Hong Kong, a beautiful chicken, whole chicken, except this whole chicken had the head and the eyes and the beak, and even the little feet, and, you know, that's a little different than the way we serve it in Maine.

But I have to tell you that Tokyo really, really was a week of... Thank God for the sake and the little bottles of Coca-Cola 'cause that's what I lived on.

They gave us raw Kobe beef, on which they made it even more elegant by breaking a raw egg on top of it. We had...the real kicker, I guess, for me, the worst, was last evening, wonderful dinner, they put jumbo prawns on a grill in front of me, and I look at them, and they're hopping on the grill.

And I'm thinking, my God, these things are alive. And even after the wonderful chef took his knife and chopped their heads right off and put those prawns on my plate, they were still moving. Now I'm going to tell you, I'm not a vegetarian, but I now have a new rule. I don't eat anything that's still alive.

So, Tim, that's kind of the worst of my experiences, all about food. How about you?

Tim

Well, I'll tell you what, I've been doing this for seventeen years as an association executive, not always with the REALTORS; I started out with the architects. And three months after I took my first job I had my first convention. It was at a beautiful mountain resort in the mountains of western North Carolina, and it was a black tie gala event to conclude the festivities. We had 400 people invited, tuxedos and formal gowns, and this was the architects association, so we had the number one architect in America, who was going to use 35 millimeter slides – I just told you how old I am – to do his presentation.

Well, a funny thing happened on the way to the banquet. The reception was supposed to start at six-thirty, and at about five forty-five, a massive thunderstorm hit the hotel and knocked out all the power, and the hotel did not have a backup generator. So from 5:45 p.m. until 12:30 a.m. the hotel was without electricity, without air conditioning. It was a sweltering summer night. So you can kind of get the picture of all these men stripping down their jackets, covered with perspiration. A lot of the ladies weren't really thrilled about the opportunity to spend the night in a steam room.

And, you know, I was devastated. I thought that this was going to be the worst thing that ever happened to me. It was not only going to be my first convention, it was going to be my last convention. Well, when it all got over with, my volunteer leader came on up to me and he said, "Son, there's nothing you can do about the weather, nothing you can do about electricity or lack of it." People really had a good time. It was a very communal atmosphere. And, you know, he said, "You can only control those things that you can control." Nonetheless, I still have a lot of nightmares about that night in 1990.

Sharon

I bet you do, I bet you do. So what are we here to talk about, Tim?

Tim

Well, I think Dick was talking about teamwork, and we're going to keep with the same theme. And I think you've got something you want to mention, for starters, on teamwork.

Sharon

Yeah, absolutely. Okay, let's talk about bringing talent to the team. What Tim and I want to do here today is spend a little bit of time...he's been an association executive for...and has got a lot of good experience. I've been through some good times, bad times with the REALTOR association. Hopefully I've got some things that I can share with you as well. And what we'd like to do is talk to you a little bit about the things that you need to do and maybe some of the things that you don't want to do.

So let's talk about bringing talent to the team. You're association executives or you're incoming leadership, the volunteer leaders, and your job is to make sure that your team and your association is the very best it can be. And I will tell you, bringing talent to the team, reaching out to find new talent, not just bringing back the same people year after year, is one of the most important things you can do.

And I will tell you there's no finer example of that than Dick Gaylord, our incoming president. He has done a masterful job at matching brand new people who have great experience at either the local or state, but haven't been involved in NAR, and he's brought them in. It's really incredible.

So you want to match the people with their skills. I will guarantee you that the place where you've put just a person's name because you needed to fill in a line on that roster for a committee chair or a task force chair, where you haven't really paid attention to what their talents are versus the job you're asking them to do, that's the place where you'll have your biggest challenge in 2008, and you'll be really sorry that you didn't think about the talents of the people before you lined them up with the job.

And the last one is a Japanese word, "kaizen." It means strive for continuous improvement. I will tell you that if a 50% participation goal in ARPAC was great in 2007, it's up to you to raise that bar and make it better in 2008. This is an important part of your job, to never sit back and accept what was success for today as success for tomorrow. You know, they say about Sam Walton that he never...he lived every day of his life striving to be better at what he did, and I think we can all learn a lesson from him.

Tim

Thank you. I'm going to talk a little bit about practice, and the difference that practice makes. But Sharon, I want to share something that you mentioned a little bit earlier.

Sharon

Oh, I do.

Tim

And you can talk about how this falls into place in terms of a racing analogy.

Sharon

Okay, so Tim's trying to cover up the fact that I didn't do my second slide. Very nice, Tim. [*Laughter.*] Thank you. You're a good guy to work with.

Tim

Rule number one: Always make your volunteer leader look good.

Sharon

Absolutely, thank you.

I've counted on my association executives many times over the years to bail me out. Okay, so in talking about bringing talent to the team, what happens at the racetrack is the last inch of a foot. Think about that, the last inch of a foot. A lot of people don't realize what has to happen between races. It takes hundreds of man hours for every hour that you run. And that's what this is all about.

I will tell you that I was thinking this morning, just when I was coming in, for this little presentation that we're doing here. Thirteen different NAR staff people backed me up, talked to me, helped me get together what they wanted, how we were going to present, and I'm just one little piece of what's been going on for over a year. Think of the dynamics of what it's taken for twelve months to put together such an incredible program as you're going to participate in these next two days.

So it's really important, I'll tell you, the best example for me about good people and bringing talent to the team is a lady that I just first worked with in conjunction with this program. Her name's Beth Theobald, and she does the PowerPoints that you're looking at. So Saturday night, I'm sitting at home in Maine; it's about ten o'clock. I'm making some adjustments to what I want for the text, and I say, "Well, I'll email it to Beth now, when she comes in on Monday morning she'll get it back to me."

And lo and behold, about three minutes after I hit the "send" button, I get an email back from Beth: "Hey, I'll get this right back to you." And before I went to bed that night, I'd

gotten back the revised drafts. Now I don't know how much they pay Beth, but it's probably not enough.

So Dale, you want to listen to that. But that's the kind of talent that you want to bring to your team, people who will do their job and do it really well.

Tim

Okay. Okay, now let's talk about practice. Whether you are a top athlete or you're a skilled musician, there's absolutely no substitute for practice, and repetition is the key here. The same rule applies to you if you're going to be a successful volunteer leader in the year 2008. You must constantly practice and train your skills.

John Wooden, a former basketball coach at UCLA, was the greatest coach in the history of college basketball. His teams, in a twelve-year period, won ten national championships. Now, Coach Wooden had a lot of secrets to his success, but he really didn't pay much attention to what the other team was doing. He worried about his team and preparation. And one of his famous quotes from Coach Wooden is this: "Failing to prepare is preparing to fail."

Now, how does this all come into play for you as a volunteer leader in the year ahead? You've got to prepare for meetings. You need to set aside some quality time to sit down with your association executive prior to your membership meetings, prior to your Board of Directors meetings. Go over the agenda, talk about potentially thorny issues, and work out some of those issues in advance. Bottom line, there's no substitute for practice. You've got to be able to understand the issues. You've got to do your homework.

I'll give you a little five-word acronym: P to the fifth power. Perfect preparation prevents poor performance. If you take the time to prepare for a meeting, your chances of that meeting being a success are much greater.

A couple of things that you can do in terms of making yourself a more successful volunteer leader in the year to come. If you haven't already taken some sort of spokesperson training, I certainly encourage you to do so. REALTORS bring a lot of talents to the table: expert negotiators, people who have strong people skills. Very few of you have, as part of your own personal cachet, the ability to speak articulately in front of a large audience, whether it's 200 people back home or whether it's 1,400 people like this. You need to make an investment in spokesperson training. NAR provides a number of opportunities. So do a number of other associations, including your state association.

So make spokesperson training a priority, but don't just look at it as a one time thing. You've got to go home, practice your skills, get in front of the mirror, practice your speech over and over and over again, because you're going to be speaking to the news media, you're going to be presenting at your local membership meetings, you're going to

be speaking across the state, if you're a state volunteer leaders. And what you have to do, your ultimate responsibility is to put a good face on the association. So invest the time in spokesperson training and continue to practice.

Lastly, make an investment in leadership training. As volunteer leaders and your association executive, you're here today to get two days of pretty intensive leadership training. But think about the rest of your team. Think about your committee chairs. Think about some of the people who are on your Executive Committee. What are you doing at the local or the state level to get those people ready to accomplish their jobs? Again, there are a variety of options. But don't discount the need to provide meaningful professional development opportunities for your association executive.

I think it should be an absolute priority for your AE to not only attend this meeting, but to attend the NAR annual convention, the NAR mid-year meeting, and then, last, but not least, the AE institute which is held each March. All of these meetings provide a veritable cornucopia of information for your association executive to take back home and do a better job on behalf of you and the rest of the members.

In closing, let me share with you a quote from Stephen Covey, who wrote probably the best self-help book of the 1990s, mega best seller. It's called *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. One of those habits was "sharpen your saw." Take time to do the things to make you prepared to be a success, whether that's regular exercise, regular sleep, and regular practice of your trade. Give your AE the opportunity to sharpen his or her saw, and your year will be that much more successful.

A little quote about practice, and it comes from the good people with NASA. Our space agency probably spends more time practicing than any other agency, and for very good reason. Richard Jackson, a flight director with NASA said, "At NASA we conduct scores of test flights in advance of actual missions. One recent simulation had twenty – twenty simultaneous failures. But you get real satisfaction when you play out a mission in advance, you practice it, you fly the actual mission, you bring it home, and safely land it."

I can tell you nothing feels better than having a big meeting and knowing that you did everything you could do to prepare, practice for that meeting. You know, and if you have the thunderstorm and the lights go out, well, you can't do anything about that. But you can do everything about the practice part.

Sharon

That's great. Okay, so we want to practice. Now we want to play our position. And I'm going to tell you, this isn't always easy. And I'm not sure whether it's harder for association executives that are there every year and they deal with leadership that comes in and comes out, or whether it's more difficult for us as volunteer leaders. We're all

Type A personalities, staff or volunteer, and we all know how to run our business, we know how to fix problems, and we just want to jump in and do those kind of things.

But you have to remember, what's your role? What territory are you supposed to cover? What is your job? Teamwork is really just...it's kind of like this. You take people, you take their jobs. They have roles that are very well defined. But when they come together, they build something that's much stronger than any of them alone could be. But it only works if they fit together and everybody stays on target with their job.

Teamwork really is interdependence. You've got to avoid the impulse to micromanage, and honestly, I do think that there are times when I've been guilty of this, and probably everybody in this room could say the same thing. You've got to understand what your job is, but you really have to understand what your job isn't. You've got to play your position.

Volunteer leaders shape the vision and the mission, and the association executive is responsible for seeing that it gets done. Sure, he doesn't do it all by himself. He uses that team of volunteer leaders and his staff; that's his job. But it's really important for us to remember to play our position.

Many of you might know Jerry Markbreit; he's a pretty famous referee, they tell me, for pro football, and he says, "Officiating a football game involves a complex interaction of responsibilities. You have to work about 160 plays every game. The trick is to see everything." You can't do somebody else's job, but what you do need to do is to work together, and that's what teamwork is all about.

When that football game starts, there are seven referees, umpires and judges out there on the field, and they're not all doing the same job. They have their area of that turf that they're responsible for, and the way they work together as a team is important to the result. And whether it's a football game or whether it's running a REALTOR association, it's all the same. It all comes down to teamwork.

Tim

You bet. Okay, we've been talking about teamwork. Now we're going to put it into action. We're going to have something interactive. You got a registration packet. Inside that registration packet there is a document which is entitled "President Association Executive Task List." If you would, please pull that out. Now I'm assuming...

Sharon

Here's a little teamwork.

Tim

Here we go.

Sharon

I'll hand it to you.

Tim

Thank you. It's got that, you know, neat little black logo up there at the top left, if you can see that on camera. That's what you're looking for, okay? Now I'm assuming that in most cases we have an association executive sitting right next to your incoming president. You're going to work as a team member. Turn to the second page of the document, and you're going to see that there are a series of things such as state NAR participation, communications, and community involvement.

You're going to go through this. This is a checklist. Now we're not going to do all of it now, but we are going to take a brief time out from this scintillating presentation to give you about eight to ten minutes to start working with this with your volunteer leader and your association executive, and figure out who's responsible for what. Now there are no right or wrong answers here, but there is one absolute requirement: you must talk to the person you're with. You must communicate, all right? Ready, set, go! We'll talk to you in ten minutes.

Sharon

Okay, so now, Tim, we have to try to get everybody to stop talking. Tim and I talked about this yesterday. We realize it's really dangerous to bring a group together and then kind of let them talk, and then try to hope to get their attention again, but look at this – it worked.

Okay, so we apologize to the people over here on this side of the room who had no lights. We asked you to work, and you couldn't read anything, so hopefully you had a good chat with the people you're sitting with. I would normally take the time to say that probably it's Tim Kent's fault, because he just told us about having no lights and no air conditioning at his last meeting, but seeing as he covered so well for me –I wouldn't say that about him.

The purpose of what we just did was, really, NAR has asked us – Gaylord has asked us – to make sure that you are aware that that's in your packet, because it's a wonderful opportunity. A couple weeks ago I started going down through it and I said okay, if I was the incoming President of NAR again, where would I draw the line on these? And you

know, some of them I was really clear, this is someone's, you know, the president's job, this is the association executive's job; I was really clear. Sometimes it's one that we do together.

But you know what? There were some that I really wasn't clear about, and that's exactly what you want to try to avoid. What you want to try to avoid is not knowing what your job is, and not sticking to your job. So I think that's it. Thanks for doing the project. What we're hoping you'll do is that you will take it back with you and that you will spend some time with it with your association executive and volunteer leaders, and see if you can avoid some of the pitfalls of not knowing what the jobs are, and who's in charge.

Tim

You bet.

Sharon

Yeah.

Tim

It'll be a great tool for you to use throughout the coming year. Okay, I'm going to tread on some dangerous territory here, so if I offend anybody, I'm sorry. All of you volunteer leaders, you've worked real hard to get where you are. You've done a lot of grunt work on the state and local level and now you're about to be your local or state association president, and that's a great thing. But I want you to remember a couple of important words. It's not all about you. Okay? It's not all about you. And it's not all about the Association executive either. It's about the Association.

As Dick mentioned in his wonderful presentation, we're getting ready to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the National Association of REALTORS. A lot of our state and local associations are just about as old. There have been a whole lot of state and local association leaders at meetings like this for the preceding years. The year next year is very important. Don't let me minimize that in any respect. But it is but a snapshot in time. And your job is to be a good steward for the association, and hopefully leave it in better shape a year from now than it was as you took over.

I hear a lot of people try to give snapshots or pictures or anecdotes about what the volunteer leaders should be doing. A volunteer leader should be a cheerleader, should be showcasing other people. Not taking all the credit, but trying to bring up a whole legion of volunteer leaders. There's an old cliché. It's been very misused or overused. The word T-E-A-M, team? There's no "I" in that. If you're going to work as a team, keep that in mind.

Richard Mendenhall, maybe one of the greatest presidents in the history of the National Association of REALTORS, Columbia, Missouri, 2001. He had a wonderful quote. Let me share it with you. "Leadership. It's not about titles; it's not about awards, expense accounts or entitlements. Leadership is all about making a difference in people's lives." That's what you're here to do.

I hear a lot of volunteer leaders talk about their legacy, what they want to leave behind. I would caution you about that. And as I do that, let me tell you a story about one of my early volunteer leaders. I always have a conversation with the volunteer leader, and it sort of goes like this. Before they take office I say, "So, Joe, you know, what do you hope to accomplish as the president of the association?" And I sat down with this gentleman and had that conversation. I asked him the question. He says, "Tim, let me tell you something. What I want is to have, on my tombstone, 'He created no damage.'"

And, you know, at the time I kind of scratched my head and walked away from that conversation, and I didn't get it. I thought, eh, this is a guy who doesn't have much vision, and doesn't have much ambition, and this is just going to be kind of a do nothing year. He looked at himself as a steward for the association. And the fact of the matter is, he's one of the two or three best volunteer leaders I ever had. There's never been anybody more dedicated to the association and doing the right thing for the right reasons. So if you're looking for something to put on your tombstone, that works.

I hear people talking about an analogy that the association executive is the head coach and the volunteer leader is the quarterback, and gets to score all the touchdowns. Okay. Here's a better analogy for you, and I like to use the basketball court. Think of the volunteer leader as the point guard. Now those of you who are basketball fans, think what a good point guard does. A point guard doesn't shoot all the time.

A point guard is the leader of the team, brings the ball up, gets everybody in their offensive set, and makes sure that the ball gets in the hands of the people who can score. Think of yourself as a point guard. And as you're doing that, keep this in mind, that your strategic plan is responsible for establishing the vision. That's what your legacy should be: developing a strong strategic plan and developing a budget to make it all happen.

Last, but not least. You saw Dick introduce all the members of the NAR leadership team, you know, the President-elect, the first vice president, the immediate past president, etc. I really encourage you to work as a leadership team instead of as a monarchy. You will get more buy in, you'll develop more consensus. You'll also give yourself some cover, in case your members start wondering who made that stupid decision? So work as a leadership team. You'll develop the leaders for the future and the concept really works.

Leave it to a fourth grader to be able to figure out what teamwork really means. Tiffany Evans, she's a fourth grader from Carrollton, Texas. She says, "If there's one person on the team who never helps anybody, and they're always so mean, and they think that they're the best people in the world, it's just gonna bring the whole team down." It's just

not very pleasant. A good team player plays with everybody else and always helps them out when they have a bad day. Keep that in mind.

Sharon

I love that one, Tim, and I'll tell you, I remember being here when Bill Chee was really the author of the leadership team concept for NAR, when he did move it away from where the president did darn well what he wanted to do. It was really up to – and I can say “he” back then, because there weren't any women – but they really did make all the decisions, and Bill really helped us see that having a team of people with common goals making the decisions ended up with a better work product so, you know, I was very glad to see that happen before my time.

So I want to talk about keeping your commitment. You all remember, it was probably a year ago...well, I don't know, maybe even a couple of years ago now, when you decided you were going to be president of your association, or when you, as an association executive, decided to take the job at the REALTOR association. And you took it because you, you know, for whatever your reasons were, but I'm sure you had good reasons.

Well, now it's the time, you know, we're right down to the kickoff here, and it's time for us to start the game, and it's really, as Tim said, not all about you, but it really does come down to you in a lot of ways. You said yes, now's the time to do the job. I can tell you that if you're counting down the days until your term is over, then I bet everybody in your association is feeling the same way. [*Laughter.*] And I can almost guarantee you that the staff's got a little calendar hidden back in the break room – [*laughter*] – and they're checking off every day until you're out of there.

So come to it with attitude. I'm a strong believer that attitude is more important than raw talent, and I think that we have a choice every day. We have a choice. What kind of a day are we going to have? Is it going to be a good day or is it going to be a bad day? Are we going to be friendly or are we going to be mean? You know, think about Tiffany. She's run into the mean players. It's not a lot of fun, that little fourth grader. Well, we see some of them, too. We have that option every day, what kind of day are we going to have.

So let me tell you what happened to me two weeks ago. Honestly, not made up, this happened. I go in to the office. It's Monday morning, it's quarter of eight, and I go through the drive-through at Tim Hortons to get my iced coffee like I do every morning. Now they've got kind of a messy little way to get into the line for the drive-through. You can either go through the long way or you can go through the parking lot and kind of catch it in the middle.

To make a long story short, I'm the kind of person who takes the shortcut through the middle. But I always look to see if there's a car coming through the right way so I don't cut them off. I saw a car, I waited, I let him go by, and then I pulled in behind him.

Well, lo and behold, I didn't realize there was another car behind him, so I did scoot into the line in front of her. Well, let me tell you, I'm now in this line, this great big black SUV comes right up on the tail of me. I swear to God there's not an inch between her car and my car.

I look up in my rearview mirror because she is honking her horn, and I can't hear what she was saying, but I'm telling you, her face was so screwed up, she was hollering at me, and I know it wasn't nice words. And I'm even going to tell you her fingers were up in the air, and it wasn't all of them. It was just two. And I'm sitting there...now there's no way for me to get out, I can tell you. If I could have pulled out of line I probably would have, 'cause I'm thinking, "Wow, this lady's really having a bad day. It's quarter of 8:00. I pity the poor people she's going to go to work with."

So I pull up, I order my coffee, I'm saying, wow, 30 seconds I've taken out of her day by being in line. I pull up to the window, I get my iced coffee, and I say to the lady at the drive-up window, "Look, I'd like to pay for that lady's breakfast behind me." She said, "You what?" I said, "Yeah." She says, "It's \$3.89." I gave her the money and I said, "Look, when she pulls up, would you just tell her I said to have a good day?" Now I'm hoping that maybe that lady will feel just like maybe she went over the top just a little bit. That I'm really not, you know, the worst person on the earth that she's ever going to meet, and maybe she'll have a better day.

But that's what I mean. You know, it's all about attitude. It's not so much about how skilled we are, or how talented we are. That helps. But the attitude's really key, and it's up to you to set the tone for the attitude in your office.

And then I want to talk about being prepared to sacrifice for the team. Doesn't that sound like, I don't know, we've got to draw blood? What do we have to do to sacrifice for the team? For me it's little things, and I'm sure you're going to experience it. Last Sunday was a beautiful Maine day. Eight-five degrees, bright and sunny, I live on a lake. My kids are out, the grandkids are out, and everybody's getting ready to go on the pontoon boat and go for a ride on the lake and do some tubing. And I had to stay in and work on this presentation.

Now that might not have drawn blood, but I'll tell you, it came real close. I didn't want to be inside working on this. But when Dick Gaylord called me and asked me to do it, could you ever say no to Dick Gaylord? No, absolutely not. So, you know, those kinds of things are the kinds of sacrifices you make. But I knew hey, there's another Sunday coming up in a couple of days and I'm going to be out there, and I'll guarantee you I'll be on the pontoon boat; I won't be inside working on something.

So be prepared to sacrifice for the team. Don't regret it. I can guarantee you that if you enjoy your year, and you take every minute to do a good job, you'll get far many more good things out of it than the little bits of sacrifices that you'll make. So in talking about sacrifice, we have here a quote from Paul Washington.

Tim

And Paul, in case you're wondering, is the head drum major at Grambling State University.

Sharon

He is. And you know what? I can read, I think, what he wanted to say. So let's talk about it. Here's a guy, marching band, great college. The fundamentals of teamwork for the Grambling band are "doing what has to be done, what needs to be done" – whoa!

Tim

"Living within the rules and sticking to standards."

Sharon

Oh, I like sticking to standards. That's a good one. Even if it means hard work, and it usually does, even if you don't feel like it. I didn't feel like it last Sunday. And even if it involves personal sacrifice, whether you draw blood or not. So I can tell you that teamwork is teamwork. It doesn't matter whether it's a marching band or whether it's running an association, teamwork means working together, doing the right thing, and sacrificing for the team every once in a while.

Tim

Isn't that great? Sharon talked about sacrifice and taking one for the team, and she had to do it two weeks ago. Well, she's doing it again today. Please join me in wishing Sharon Millet a very happy birthday. [*Applause.*]

Sharon

Oh, thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Tim

I think we should, yeah. A one, and a-two, and a-three. [*“Happy Birthday” song is sung.*]

Sharon

Oh, thank you. I have to tell you, in my whole life I’ve never had 1,400 people sing Happy Birthday to me –so this’ll go down in my scrapbook. Thank you very much.

Tim

Oh, okay. Let’s talk about paying attention to the process. And, you know, I’ve got to tell you, by-laws, I did not major in by-laws. And Robert’s Rules of Order, it’s not my favorite thing. But if you’re gonna play the game...and if you don’t know the rules of the game it’s pretty tough to play the game well.

So between now and the time that you take office, spend some time going over your by-laws so that you do things by the rules of the book. You’ll probably get in a lot less trouble if you do that. The other thing that you should do is just take some sort of cursory course – and again, your association executive can help you with that, give you an option or two – so that you know the basics of Robert’s Rules of Order.

John Maxwell lives in Atlanta, Georgia, and I consider him really to be one of the absolute leadership gurus in America. He’s written many books on leadership, and one of those is called *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. And here’s what John says. “In order to lead today, or lead tomorrow...in order to lead tomorrow you have to learn today.” That’s why you’re coming to meetings like this. That’s why you’re trying to get prepared to be a good leader for the coming year. So pay attention to the process, know your by-laws and rules.

Like Sharon said, you’ve got to lead by building consensus. I like to use the word “inclusivity.” Bring people in on the decision making process. Use your Executive Committee, use your leadership team, or, in some cases, use your full Board of Directors to reach decisions. You, again, will get a lot less flak, and you’ll give yourself cover, and you’ll get a lot fewer disgruntled people if decisions are reached by consensus rather than through a monarchy type of government.

I think this is really important. As a volunteer leader, trying to catch problems when they’re small and fix them. You know, you’re going to be appointing – if you haven’t done so already – a lot of committee chairs and people that you’re going to be counting

on to carry out tasks throughout the year. Well, the fact of the matter is that, you know, some of those committee chairs might not do quite as good a job as you might hope they would. Spend some time talking to your fellow volunteer leaders on a regular basis. Pick up the phone or take them out to coffee.

You know, if that project that you assigned to old Joe over there isn't getting done, go talk to Joe and find out what the problem is. You know, Joe might have a personal problem that you don't know about. Somebody might be sick in his family, somebody might be dealing with a job loss; you never know. If you pick up the phone you can probably head off some of those issues.

I think you need to keep an eye on your teammates. Chuck Tanner was a pretty good baseball manager in the 1970s and '80s, and somebody asked him, "How do you manage all 25 players?" And he said, "I don't treat them all the same. Some of my players need a pat on the back. Some of them need a kick in the you-know-what. Some of them just need to be left alone." That's the key to being a good leader and being a good manager. Keep an eye on your teammates, figure out who needs encouragement, who's being out of line, and who's confused.

And I think who's out of line is important because frequently in our local associations, sometimes in our state association, you see meetings kind of fall apart because somebody gets mad at the other, or somebody starts using some behavior in the meeting that brings everybody else down. Here's a technique that I would encourage you to use. I would encourage you to have a conversation with the person directly, but to do so in private. Don't call them out in public, in the middle of that meeting.

Wait until either the meeting's over, or if there's a nice coffee break or something, where you can have a quiet conversation with the person and find out, "Hey Bill, I'm not exactly sure why you were so hard on staff during that last interchange there; maybe you can explain that to me." If you can head off some of those problems right away, you'll have a lot more success.

I think that the outcome is always influenced by the approach, that if you bring an idea to a Board of Directors meeting without properly vetting it with people in advance of that meeting, it is destined to either go down in flames or it's going to get pushed through and people will say, yeah, the president just ramrodded it through. It's not part of the strategic plan, it's not part of the budget, but he or she wanted to do it so we did it, and it's a dumb idea. Built consensus. Do it by being inclusive and not operating top down.

Our quote is from somebody, Owen Young, who was in the Boston Symphony. Now think about what an orchestra has to do to be a successful team. A good orchestra is not just a group of people who play their instruments well. It's a group of people who play well together. You've got to develop a team concept where people are playing well together, and you'll have a lot more fun. Thanks.

Sharon

Okay. Okay, we want to...this time we're not going to ask you to do anything with it, but we want to draw attention to another item that is important for you as officers and association executives. It's the CD "You Plus NAR Plus REALTORS" that's in your packet. Sometimes I've been to conferences, get really juiced up because I hear good things and I take great notes...I really do take great notes. But then sometimes – and I might get a disk like this – and then when I go home I tend to kind of maybe put them up on the shelf and not look at them again.

And I think this would be mistake because the things that are on this disk are there for one reason, and it's there to help you have an easier time at doing your job. It is chock full of resources. It's really pretty incredible. Up on the slide are just the major areas of responsibility, and then within each one of these there are dozens of things that you can use.

I was looking through the disk myself the other night and saying there's a great piece from the Center on REALTOR Technology, CRT for short. These are some of the best and brightest technology people in any industry, but they specialize for NAR right here in the real estate industry. And there are some really great tools in here. And if you're looking for speech materials, it's great resources.

There also is a section on non-dues revenue for boards and associations. And if there's a board or a state association who hasn't seriously been looking at ways to create new opportunities for non-dues revenue, then they're probably not where they need to be thinking these days, because it's really important to all of us to help keep members' dues levels down, and there are some really good tips in here on how you can do that.

There's an online presidential guide. Probably two-thirds or three-quarters of this room fall into that category. You're either going to be...you're president elect or you're first vice president, you're going to be in that slot very soon, and if you knew that there was one place that you could go to get tools that would help you do your job instead of you sitting back on a Saturday night like I'm known to do, and trying to figure it out all by yourself, here's some tools for you.

So I really encourage you to not take the disk home and put it on the shelf. I really encourage you to pick it up, put it in, and see what's there that's of interest to you and that will help you do your job.

Tim

You bet. One of the things that makes me so proud to work for the REALTOR association is that we have such incredible resources here, unbelievable. Lori Janick and her Legal Department are unparalleled in terms of their skill, expertise, and knowledge that they bring to the table.

Sharon

Yahoo!

Tim

Our Research Department puts together these incredible reports that I think our members need to take greater advantage of. And Frank Sibley, who I see here in one of the front tables, he and his staff put together a terrific magazine. And there are opportunities there because they're constantly doing features on REALTORS like the top REALTORS under the age of thirty, and so they're looking for people that they can include in these issues. So take advantage of all these opportunities. And that CD is a tremendous resource for you.

But I also encourage you to get acquainted with REALTOR.org. Great web site, and it just has tons of information. Tons of information. You're not alone out there if you're in Boise, or if you're in Raleigh, or if you're in Galveston. There's plenty of information available to you, and it's right there at your fingertips.

Sharon

It really is a great resource. I can guarantee you there's more resources at REALTOR.org than you'll ever find the time to use all of them, but if you're smart, you'll know what it is that you're looking for, and what would help you the most, and then you're going to take your time and access them that way.

Let's talk about building a climate of trust, because leadership is not all about you, but it really does start with you. You know, people are going to be looking at you. Will you keep your word? Are you consistent? Will you play fair? You know, it kind of sounds like the fourth grader Tiffany might be interested in this, too. It's not anything different than the way we are in the rest of our life. People are looking at you to say, you know, can I be...is this really a team? Are we really working together? Do we have faith in each other? Are we looking out for each other?

And that starts with you. It doesn't end with you, but by goodness, it does start with you. You're at the head, whether you're the association executive or whether you're the volunteer leader. This is one of the most important things that you can do. Everybody on the team has to buy in and help to build and keep that trust. Because I will tell you that building trust is a slow process, but rebuilding trust is almost impossible. It's a really hard thing, once you've lost it, and you don't want to go there.

People need to know that it's okay to disagree. You've got to be able to sit in a meeting, debate really important issues, have different points of view, not be afraid to speak up and talk about them, know that there's no retribution if the newest member of your team goes against or speaks against what the president has just been speaking for. If you're going to be a good president, you're going to find that the best information you will get is from people that have a different point of view than you do. It helps you to take it all in, put it together, and come out with, hopefully, something that's better than you originally went in with.

So it's really important – I cannot stress how much – Tim and I feel, from our talks, trust is really important, and it's a good thing. So trust. I think we're in the middle of the Air Show here in Chicago this week. We haven't heard the Blue Angels go overhead. But, you know, they deal with the trust factor and teamwork in a way that you and I will never experience. And the quote that we have here is that “trusting other team members is a matter of life and death when”...oh, my gosh.

Tim

“Six aircraft are flying wingtip to wingtip.”

Sharon

Okay. I told them last night I was going to have a hard time reading these. I feel really bad about this, guys. Okay, when they are flying wingtip to wingtip at 500 miles an hour. It's a big deal. They live or die on the trust that they have for their teammates. And our trust may not determine life or death for an individual, but you know what? A lot of times the issues that we're talking about do deal with the life or death of our industry, or the life or death of our association. It's really important stuff, and trust is really central to teamwork.

Tim

If you're going to have a good team, you've got to be a good sport. Sort of the things that you're supposed to learn when you're playing youth soccer or Little League baseball. But, you know, it comes down to this: good sports are responsible for greasing the wheels of group interaction. Good sports promote harmony. By contrast, I think that poor sports put a real serious strain on team relationships.

Now a couple of things. Show respect for others. That goes without saying. But be humble. You know, go ahead and celebrate your victories, but don't take all the credit

yourself. Don't be a ball hog. You know, that's something you learn on the school yard. I think a couple of other things that you have to remember is that there are going to be mistakes made, and don't be afraid to admit your mistakes. Just admit them and move on and try to do better the next time.

Be able to accept criticism without taking it personally. That's exceedingly important. And always have a sense of humor. I mean, we're not operating in a life and death situation. This is a volunteer association. You represent your professional interests, but boy, this is supposed to be fun. So laugh about it, have a good time.

I think you have to keep this in mind, and Sharon touched on it earlier, you know, the ability to compromise, share, do things in an inclusive fashion, build consensus. Don't ever forget this, that as the volunteer leader of your state or local REALTOR association, your character, your attitude are constantly on display. You know, the teammates are going to be paying attention to how you handle yourself. Your local newspaper is going to be paying attention to how you handle yourself. Just make sure that those people don't charge you with unsportsmanlike conduct. Be a good sport and do the right things for the right reason.

Kids really get it, don't they?

Sharon

They do.

Tim

I mean, this is from Quentin Roberts, who's a little boy basketball player from Lexington, Kentucky, and Quentin says, "You win, you win. You leave it at that. Don't be puttin' it in nobody's face. You lose, well, you lose, that's just it, you know, shake hands and move on." I love watching kids play youth sports. You know, when the game's over, you know, they line up and they walk through there and they shake hands with everybody. Why don't adults do that? You ever think about that? I wish they would, because I think we'd all have a lot more fun that way.

Sharon

I agree with you, Tim. Leads right into this last one of mine, and it's lead by example. You know, how you act matters, both professionally and personally. You've taken on a position, when you put your hand up and they do the swearing in ceremony, they talk about the fact that you're accepting a job of responsibility, that you'll be looked to as a

leader of your association, within the industry, within your community, and that's true. How you act matters.

And I'll tell you, I had a wake up call on this at the first meeting where I ever said the words out loud to a group of people that I wanted to be president of NAR. And had my family with me, you know, we'd spent the day together, and that night we were having one of those campaign receptions like we all do. And this lady came up and shook my hand and she said, "I'm so glad to meet you." She said, "I saw you and your family this morning when you were having breakfast, and my husband pointed you out and said, 'Look, that woman's gonna be the second woman president of NAR,' and I was watching you all and..." It just kind of, whoa! Okay, so what were we doing this morning, and what was I wearing, and what was I talking about?

And all of a sudden it just struck me that when you think, you know, you're not up on a stage, that somehow you're not still that president, and that they're not looking at you, and they're not watching how you act, don't buy that for a minute. You want to keep in mind how you act really does matter all the time.

So when members are asked to contribute to a cause, you need to be the first to step up to the plate. I'll tell you what, you want to be the first one to write the check for ARPAC, and you want to write the biggest check you can afford to write, because you're setting the stage and you're setting the example for everybody in your board. They're going to be looking to see how you...if what you say is what you do.

I'll tell you that respect is earned, it's not an entitlement. Respect is something that you do need to earn from the people around you. And hopefully, by this point in time, you've got a good reputation, you've been doing the right things, and you're going to have a good year. Don't blow it. Don't give that trust away. Make sure you make a difference. Make sure that you add value to this. Don't just be caretaker. Add value to the association and to the job that's ahead of you.

And then...I love this, because I've got a friend, I think you all know Virginia Cook, she's just the greatest lady on earth. But she talks different down there in Texas than we talk up in Maine. And when I first met her it was like she was always coming out with these little sayings. You know, we don't have little sayings up in Maine; it just isn't part of our speech pattern. But Virginia would say that Texas say, "Ah, big hat, no cattle." Big hat, no cattle. What you say matters. Who you are matters. You can act. You can talk like you're one kind of person, but if you're not that person, they're going to see, and they're going to be saying behind your back, "Big hat, no cattle."

So one of my favorite quotes I found a few years ago, and I thought it was kind of appropriate here. "There are three ways to get to the top of a very tall oak tree. You can either cut it down, you can climb to the top, or you can sit on an acorn and wait." This is your choice. You can cut it, you can climb it, or you can wait. But I'll tell you what, if you're climbing, the rest of your team will be climbing right along with you. And I can

guarantee you, if you're sitting on that acorn, they're going to be sitting right on the sidelines, too. So make the right choice. Make the right choice.

All right, Tim. I'll tell you what, Tim and I had a goal, when we started today, and our goal was to get you out, or to get our part done ten minutes early, because this is another leadership tip that you ought to know. If you can get it done quicker than they're planning on you getting it done, they're going to love you. And if you are one of those people who always runs over, I'm telling you, I'm not sure what you're going to do to make up for that.

Tim

Well, get ready to watch a bunch of people walk out of the back of the room.

Sharon

Yeah, that's right. That's exactly right. So I want to give some credit to Price Pritchett. Back when I was in the NAR chairs, I came across this man's work, and I have to tell you that much of what we shared with you today came from one of these great little booklets that Price Pritchett puts out. You can find him at www.pritchettnet.com. He's got books on all different kinds of topics, and specifically the ones I love are the ones about winning, about teamwork. And this was from one called "Teamwork: 16 Steps to Building a High Performance Team." So I think you'll enjoy him. He's a great resource.

Tim

You got one last piece of advice?

Sharon

You know, we talked about this, personally, what would we say to all of you, and I thought about it for a long time, because I've come across a lot of good information, I've come across a lot of good people over the years. But I decided to tell you two things that I learned from two of the most outstanding association executives that I've ever worked with.

And I'm not just talking about the REALTOR family. Whether it's the hospital board or the bank board that I'm on back home, whether it's their CEOs, whether it's the other kinds of civic or charitable organizations that I belong to and work with people there who are great staff people, there are two that just absolutely stand out in my lifetime as being two of the best people I've ever worked with, and one was Terry McDermott.

And I'll tell you what I learned from Terry, and I'll give you his words of advice. And his words of advice were, there's always a reason to smile: find it. And I watched Terry

sit in very difficult meetings, difficult discussions, lots of give and take, lots of different opinions, and he always could find a way to help us put a smile back on our face, not take it too seriously, or, you know, just keep you well entertained over dinner so that you had enough oomph to go back in that room and beat it out of everybody the next day. So to Terry, he was a great guy to work with, and I feel very honored to have learned so much from him.

And the other one is my favorite person on earth, and she's here today, and that's Cindy Butts. Cindy is our state association executive. If you haven't met...I bet if you're an AE in this room and you've been in the association more than a year, I guarantee that you know Cindy Butts. She is definitely one of the best and brightest.

I've always considered myself as somebody who could do a lot of work, you know, I can multitask, I can get a lot of work done, I can work the Saturday nights when I have to. But then I met Cindy when she came to Maine to take over the association executive job, and I'll tell you, she makes me feel inadequate. I was blown away.

And the real thing that I was blown away with was that Cindy didn't argue about whether to do it or not, she just did it. I think that's where Nike go the line, you know, "just do it," was from Cindy, actually. Because we were a small association, small staff, and people would come back from meetings like this with great ideas for new programs, new ventures, new things to do, and we were used to, in Maine, saying well, we can't do that because we don't have enough staff, and we don't have the talent, or we don't have the technology.

And then Cindy came along and it was like it was done before we even had an opportunity to say we don't think we could do it. And Cindy said to me, "Sharon," she said, "I just believe that if we took all of the energy it takes to figure out why we can't do something and we just went ahead and did it, everybody's happy and we're a better organization." So from Cindy Butts I learned just do it. So, Tim, what about you?

Tim

Well, okay. Cindy's certainly the best of the best, I'll tell you that. One piece of advice I have, I'll give it to you in the form of a question. I'll get asked...at a cocktail party people ask me what I do and I say I manage the North Carolina Association of REALTORS. And then they find out that I have a different volunteer leader every year, and I inevitably get asked, "How do you work in that atmosphere?"

Let me tell you something, that's the best part of my job. I really enjoy the opportunity to work with a different volunteer leader each year because it recharges me, it gives me a new sense of energy, I'm able to look at the world through the eyes of somebody different, and I'm able to build a relationship with somebody that I may or may not have known that well before. So look at new volunteer leaders as a challenge and as an opportunity.

Sharon

And one last final thing, if I might, and I know Tim shares this feeling because we've talked about it any number of times. You're the 2008 leadership team for the REALTOR associations across the country, and I just want to say to you that you are blessed that you will be serving with President Dick Gaylord in 2008. He is an incredible leader, he has a great leadership team, and I guarantee you, he will never let you down. So good luck to you all in 2008.

Tim

The digital clock down here at the bottom says we are out of here with four minutes and forty seconds to spare. Let's get out of here. All right.

Sharon

All right! You got it. Thank you.