

Leadership Development through Equine Coaching

by

Dana R. Muth, MSODA

Vice President, BankLogic.Net, CPAs & Consultants

We've all had bosses. Some bosses may have been good and others bad. But I think most can agree that the best bosses inspired us to work hard for them no matter how difficult or mundane the task.

The community banking industry has been around for 100+ years with a primary focus on handling deposits and making loans while serving their communities. While that simple formula has gone through many competitive, regulatory and technological metamorphoses, one component remains unchanged. Communities still turn to community banks for leadership. And community bankers in turn have always answered the call in helping lead within their communities.

So why have community banks struggled so much with developing leadership within their own business cultures? Why do management teams continuously spend thousands on a strategic plan document that often has great ideas that include leadership development but in the end just gather dust?

In most cases it's because the strategic plan does not often adequately address the "how". How do you get your employees to go where you want them to go in implementing your bank's plan or your bank's set of great ideas?

As unlikely as it sounds, one terrific avenue of effective leadership development that has been sweeping across the country is Equine Coaching. You know - horses. Equine Coaching goes something like this. If you can get a horse to do something you want it to do, you increase your chances exponentially of inspiring employees to perform tasks correctly and efficiently in a manner that is rewarding to them.

Many community bankers hold their strategic planning and leadership development sessions offsite. This allows participants to be in an environment that is more conducive to careful thought and reflection. Some may even start the session with a non-traditional ice-breaker that includes a fun game.

Now imagine what can happen when that ice-breaking fun is also the leadership development session. That is one of the many benefits of Equine Coaching.

More importantly, Equine Coaching provides the following bottom-line benefits:

- Uncover behaviors that negatively impact your customers, employees, and family
- Earn trust and respect more quickly by aligning your mind, body, and emotions with your actions
- Communicate more clearly
- Recognize limiting habits and learn how to change them
- Discover new ways to resolve conflict
- Shed beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes that no longer serve you
- Try new leadership styles, communication methods and relationship-building tactics in a safe environment
- Uncover what you love to do
- Clarify your future direction and goals

Whether you have never been around a horse or have been riding horses throughout your life, setting up this type of interaction around your bank grounds or a nearby equine center will facilitate an exhilarating leadership learning session. Unlike traditional horse training methods aimed to teach the horse to “do as I say” and involve the use of pain, fear and intimidation (I know none of you have ever experienced this at work), Equine Coaching relies on the horse and handler establishing a bond of communication and trust. Equine coaches create an environment in which the horse can learn. With horses, actions speak louder than words.

Not everyone is born a great communicator, let alone motivator. But finding ways to communicate and motivate effectively can be something cultivated within your organization. Interacting with horses helps to unbridle the potential within. “Inspiring employees to perform tasks correctly and efficiently in a manner that is rewarding to them” is our definition of leadership. Equine Coaching may just be the winning ticket for your organization.

Send e-mail to dana@banklogic.net