



NORTH FLORIDA NEWSLETTER:  
NOTES FROM THE ROAD  
JUNE 2010  
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#### MB'S MOMENT: HELP MAKE EACH OTHER BETTER

*"If we meet somebody who's never made a mistake, let's help them start a religion. Until then...help to make each other better." - Gil Scott-Heron (February 2010)*

Warning: Lengthy diatribe follows. My wife got to hear a great example of how living in a family of law enforcers can affect your behavior the other day, as I discussed a school issue with friends while putting together packets for an event. Sometimes Kierkegaardian "Either/Or" tendencies (black/white, right/wrong, good/evil) come out; other times (Jimmy) Buffetian "Tampico Trauma" tendencies (you want to be everybody's friend) show up to play. Invariably you end up upsetting *everybody*, but at least you get your opinion off your chest.

Every organization undergoes change some time within its life, with a degree of controversy which goes along with the turf. I've had days to chew on this topic, something which was and is still a small part of my job. I can tell my point of view is going to wax somewhere between critical & naïve because of the tendencies I mentioned above. I haven't figured out exactly where it will land, it won't be evident until the end.

My present employer hired me as the result of changes they needed to do in the way they trained people. A bunch of high level leaders in the organization, as well as a number of recently-retired ones, reviewed training and said it was too rigid, didn't meet the immediate need of the worker, and in many cases required the worker to travel from their home to schools which were only in three or four cities. If classroom training was converted into computer courses, my employer thought, the money spent on travel and living expenses, plus instructor salaries and support expense, could be used on recapitalization. Seemed like a good thought at the time, right?

So, the leadership said, "make it so." There were a few voices of dissent who asked questions like, "who will build or maintain this computer-based training?" and "what about the jobs which cannot be trained by computer?" Most importantly, the question "what if the learner has difficulty learning without an instructor?" The leadership listened more closely to the voices of adult learning specialists and financial analysts, who had never taken or maintained a computer-based course, rather than listening to the customer - workers and supervisors - who said the consequences of poor/inadequate training would be hazardous.

Four years later, another group of leaders in my organization decided the personnel management system needed a revamp; they couldn't fire workers who didn't perform well on the job, or reward outstanding workers more than the ones who "just did their job." Worst of all, with many employees retiring or leaving for other firms, there was no way to hire talented individuals at wages which equaled or exceeded entry salaries for the competition. During a community forum, the same leader responsible for executing the computer-based training mandate said, "*I cannot see how ANYONE can be opposed to this new personnel system.*" I will mention he was near retirement and not going to live with the consequences. Two other (comparable) organizations had gone into this kind of personnel management system; both described it to government researchers as a horror show. The transition occurred, beginning at the lowest levels of the organization. Four years later, the system retained the worst practices of the previous management system and forced the individual worker and their supervisor to spend more time evaluating the performance than performing the job.

*"If they can get you asking the wrong questions, they don't have to worry about the answers." - Thomas Pynchon*

The leaders weren't malevolent. I believe, in the majority of the cases, they had the best interest of the organization in mind. Some were on their way to the exit in the general direction of organizations which may have indirectly benefited from the decisions made by them. I will neither laud nor condemn those persons...but I will mention the unintended consequences of their decisions far outweighed their hoped-for mark on the organization.

Even the RRCA national organization makes decisions and enters into partnerships which might seem like a bad fit to the individual road runner club (I initially thought the Weight Watchers partnership was a clinker, but after walking the Crescent City Classic with my wife and some friends, I had a completely different perspective. Getting off the couch with friends to go for a walk is definitely a start to turning someone into a lifetime runner, if you make it fun.). But, the programs, decisions and partnerships which come to pass are often done because clubs at the grassroots level have said "*we have a need for this particular service. Can you help us?*"

So, if you're going to change a program or an organization, why? If the organization in question is a non-profit or a not-for profit, making decisions strictly on the basis of money might be the easiest, but not be the best measurement. Without listening to the voice of the customer, or asking if the decision is going to affect the culture in which the organization exists, club leaders can unintentionally aim for a target which ends up looking more and more like their own foot.

What are the consequences of decisions which don't take the voice of the customer or the culture a club exists in into account? Does the old song lyric "*three steps forward, two steps back*" sound familiar? Sometimes the "*smartest people in the room*" are the ones who leave the organization. I remember a "Dilbert" comic, which I think Scott Adams used in his book "The Dilbert Principle": Someone asked Dilbert how to

recognize the brightest people in his firm, and he said something like, "*they're the ones moving to other companies.*"

With road runner clubs, people might leave clubs but still participate in races sponsored by the club, so the measure in dollars and cents might not change much. The measure that might need to be considered often cannot be done with the aid of a membership roll spreadsheet or profit/loss statement. It's much more difficult to quantify the skills and abilities which go "out the door" with them. They'll most likely still be runners, but they might be less likely to either return as members or bring new members in with them.

Since clubs are made up of human beings, it is inevitable mistakes in policy are going to occur. We can help to make each other better by providing a rational voice to our road running club, and lending a hand if we have the skills to make the club better.

Or, if they're doing just fine we can help 'em start a religion.

#### INSURANCE NEWS - VOLUNTEER MEDICAL ENDORSEMENT:

Beginning in May 2010, RRCA members covered under the general liability insurance program can purchase additional insurance coverage for volunteer medical personnel. The **Volunteer Medical Personnel Endorsement covers emergency first aid and/or on-course medical treatment by properly licensed medical personnel working on a voluntary basis.** This endorsement does not cover paid medical staff. Medical volunteers who provide service at running events typically have professional liability coverage already in place to protect themselves against malpractice claims. The RRCA Volunteer Medical Personnel Endorsement is considered insurance over and above any other insurance held by the medical professional. It does, however, provide coverage when a professional liability policy does not extend coverage to emergency medical professionals volunteering at events held outside of a workplace facility. Coverage limits for medical volunteers are the same as the RRCA's General Liability policy. The cost of the additional endorsement is either \$250 or 2% of the club or event member's General Liability premium for 2010, whichever is higher. To add this endorsement to your organization's insurance policy, please send an email to Eve Mills at [membership@rrca.org](mailto:membership@rrca.org) with Medical Volunteer Insurance in the subject line, and include the name of your club or event, your name and phone number, and your request for the volunteer medical personnel endorsement. Eve will respond with an invoice for the additional premium. Once the premium is paid, you will receive a revised certificate of insurance, via email, that includes the additional medical volunteer coverage.

#### PARTNERSHIPS TO FIGHT CHILDHOOD OBESITY:

The Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation (HWCF) announced on May 4 an unprecedented, innovative alliance with leading media companies Discovery Education and Meredith Corporation to help parents, educators, and children address the problem of childhood obesity. Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation, which was launched last October, is a CEO-led organization and is a national, multi-year effort designed to help reduce obesity – especially childhood obesity – by 2015. It's a first-of-its kind coalition that **brings together more than 80 retailers, food and beverage manufacturers, sporting goods, insurance, trade associations and**

**NGOs, including the Road Runners Club of America.** The Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation will promote ways to help people achieve a healthy weight through energy balance – calories in and calories out. It focuses on three critical areas – the marketplace, the workplace and schools.

“The success of our mission to promote healthier weight depends on bringing stakeholders together to work on common goals,” said David Mackay, President and CEO of Kellogg Company and Chairman of the Board of HWCF. “We are united in a collaborative and focused effort to help children and adults achieve better energy balance between calories in and calories out.”

The HWCF has launched web-based outreach campaigns with both Discovery Education and Meredith to encourage and promote physical activity and healthy eating, especially among children. The online campaigns address rising levels of childhood obesity; it is estimated that by the end of this year, 20% of children in the United States will be obese. About one-third of American kids are currently overweight. The two complementary outreach programs are uniquely designed to support children whether at home with their families or at school with their teachers. A simple interface empowers users to easily transition between the websites creating a virtually seamless user experience educating parents and children, no matter where they are, about healthy food choices, eating tips, and physical activities.

“Parents and educators are concerned about the threat of child obesity and interested in practical ideas about how to help kids take fewer calories in and burn more out,” said Lisa Gable, Executive Director of HWCF. “This partnership will give parents and educators the tools they need to help combat child obesity.”

The comprehensive student engagement program presented by HWCF and Discovery Education at [www.energybalance101.com](http://www.energybalance101.com) leverages Discovery Education’s communications expertise and demonstrated ability to provide educators with useful tools to help their students, including community connections such as the RRCA. Discovery Education, a division of Discovery Communications, whose networks include Discovery Channel, Science Channel and Animal Planet, combines proven digital media and a dynamic user community to empower teachers to improve student achievement. Discovery Education’s digital services are currently available in over half of U.S. schools.

“Discovery Education is committed to empowering educators and students with the tools and resources necessary to make healthy decisions,” said Dr. John Whyte, MD, Chief Medical Expert, Discovery Communications. “We are pleased to join in partnership with the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation and Meredith Corporation in this effort, and are excited to launch Energy Balance 101, which brings a variety of free resources designed to help combat childhood obesity to children, educators, and parents across the country.”

**FLORIDA RUNNING AND EVENT CALENDARS:**

Looking for a place to race somewhere in Florida? There are three good on-line resources which can be reached directly through the North Florida RRCA blog, <http://www.north-florida-rrca.blogspot.com>:

(State Rep Emeritus) Ken Bendy maintains a great calendar through the Amelia Island Runners web page, at <http://www.ameliaislandrunners.com/kbendy/rrcacal.htm>.

A link to the RRCA on-line calendar, which has all RRCA member club and event club-sponsored races is also available. The direct URL is <http://www.rrca.org/events/find/>.

Last, but not least, a Google calendar of events and (state/regional/national championship, membership renewal, volunteer award nomination, coaching certification, and so on) due dates are on the blog page, or you can go directly to <http://www.google.com/calendar/render?cid=7k54sttkj3q8g5num1tode4vbk%40group.calendar.google.com>.

The calendar is also searchable from month-to-month on the blog.

#### NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS/CLUB LEADERSHIP:

Has your club elected a new board of directors, or leadership? Don't forget to make those changes to the on the RRCA website. If you don't know how to make the changes, contact Eve at the RRCA office < [membership@rrca.org](mailto:membership@rrca.org) > and she can help walk you through the process, or help with getting access so you can do the job yourself.

As always - stay safe.