

Emerging Leaders and Senior Leaders Conference Trip Report 3 – 10 August 2001, Chicago Illinois

Emerging Leaders Conference (3 – 6 August) - The Emerging Leaders Conference began on Friday afternoon, 3 August 2001. Thirty-six Corps of Engineers employees from around the world met for an icebreaker dinner and for a team event that evening. We spent the weekend and Monday reviewing the results of numerous personality and management style tests that we had taken prior to the class. We also participated in team building and leadership exercises.

Most of what I learned was known to me intuitively, but this reinforced those thoughts. I learned different management and leadership styles and that the style to use is based on the person being managed not the leaders preference. We, as a group, learned the importance of teamwork and synergy, both of which are highly dependent on listening. One thing we kept in mind in our small group was the need to enjoy what we were doing and have fun. We were continually amazed at our creative abilities when we had fun during our exercises.

We ended the conference by presenting the senior leadership with our “Do It” plans of what we, individually, were going to do to improve our organization over the next year as well as our list of things we needed from the senior leadership in order to make the “Do It” motto happen.

Senior Leaders Conference - On Monday evening we joined the senior staff for the National Awards Ceremony, which started off the senior leaders conference. We spent the next three and a half days working between events with the senior leaders and on our project and presentation. As a group we listened to Michael Grunwald of the Washington Post tell us about how and why he told his story about the Corps of Engineers. LTG Flowers and senior staff presented information on where we are headed, what we look like now and how we are going to get there. NWD emerging leaders had lunch with the senior leaders from Division and we shared some of our ideas on the Leadership Development Programs in the districts. We also had a chance to discuss issues with other senior leaders during a networking luncheon and off-site dinner on Wednesday.

I was impressed with the interest the senior leadership has in our points of view. Issues that we mentioned relating to bottlenecks and roadblocks in the Project Management Business Process were discussed later in larger groups. Our concerns about being able to complete projects on time and in a fiscally prudent manner while stumbling through the environmental compliance nightmare were also heard. There were discussions about how to attract qualified people and how to keep those people, not just working, but productive and happy.

Most of our interaction with the Senior Leadership Conference was when they were in the large sessions and we did not participate in any of the break out groups. I would like to see the Emerging Leaders be given a chance to sit in on one of those sessions next year to see the groups in action.

The week was very long and exhausting, but worth the effort. Each day we wrote in a journal and indicated our nugget of learning. My nugget for the entire trip is that trait of a level five leader that we should all keep in mind: He looks out the window to give credit for success to the team and looks into the mirror to apportion responsibility for poor results.

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