

Benjamin Franklin

I would likely not trust the eye doctor to repair a puncture in my car's tire. And I would likely not trust my mechanic to check my eyes. But I would trust them to do the job that they are competent and capable of doing.

Trust is tied to competency and capability. We tend to trust those we know can do the job. During the 18 years we were at Mbingo Baptist Hospital, the hospital continued to grow. New and modern medical equipment was purchased or donated. Medical training programs were started and visiting medical specialists came from all over the world to help train young doctors. As these programs developed and the hospital continued to grow, people came from all over the country of Cameroon and even from Nigeria for medical care. Why? because they heard of the capability and competency of the hospital and the staff at MBH.

Learn or Die.

Abraham Lincoln, America's 16th president once said, " I don't think much of a man who is not wiser today that he was yesterday".

Adjusting, adapting, and learning amid the chaos of our changing world can be challenging for today's leaders. The ability to learn quickly in the midst of crisis and rapid change is more important than learning any specific skill today.

It is easy to lose the desire to remain fresh, motivated, and innovative, especially if we have experienced some success in our positions of leadership. Ongoing learning should be a constant activity if we want to remain effective and relevant. It is important however to stay focused on our respective areas of work and ministry and make sure that ongoing reading and learning will be in areas that will help us grow in competency and capabilities related in those areas.

Leaders constantly learn and grow. Blamers think they already know.

David Horsager

A fact: Healthy ones grow And sick ones die.

- **Whether goats or chickens, corn or beans, this is the case. This even applies to organizations, businesses and leaders, healthy ones grow, and sick ones die. Imagine you need surgery to save your life, and you must choose between two doctors. One doctor keeps himself informed about the latest procedures, and the other uses outdated equipment and techniques, which of the two would you trust to do your surgery?**
- **Rick Warren, author of the Purpose Driven Life, has said that when you stop learning, you stop leading. To be a continual learner, one must have an attitude of sensitivity, humility, openness, and flexibility.**

At this point I would like to talk a little bit about what learning is. There are a few ways to define the word learn, here are three of those definitions.

*** To gain knowledge of, or skill through, study, instruction, or experience.**

*** To become aware or informed of, to discover.**

*** To fix in the mind or memory, to memorize.**

My view of "learning", at least when it applies to leadership and trustworthiness, is, you have gained information that you understand how to use in practical ways. In other words you haven't just memorized information as stated in the third definition above but have actually gained knowledge that can or has improved your abilities in a given area or work or life in general.

Let me give an example of this idea. Our hospital in Cameroon had hired a person to serve as a technician in refrigeration. His job was to care for any equipment that was used as an air conditioner, a refrigerator, or a freezer. He came with a certificate stating that he had successfully completed a training program in the area of refrigeration. I first learned of a problem with him as a couple of other hospital employees told me that their personal refrigerators were not working and he told both of them that the compressor was bad. Both of them had bought new compressors which cost them about half of their monthly salaries.

One of them had him install the new compressor but it still didn't work, it turned out that the electrical socket that it was plugged into was bad. In the second case, a friend of the person with the fridge needing repair knew of another technician who was going to be passing by the hospital and asked him if he could stop by and take a look at the problem. The man did come, looked inside the refrigerator and did something and told them to call him later if the problem persisted. The problem had been fixed. When the technician was asked later what had been the problem, he told them that the thermostat had been turned all the way to the lowest setting. This caused the refrigerator to only run a few minutes and turn off when it reached the temperature that it had been set at.

The hospital technician had received a certificate because he had memorized information about refrigeration but he did not have a functional knowledge of how a refrigerator actually works. His "education" cost some people a lot of money and was of no real help to them. A person who truly wants to grow in their competence must make sure they learn well! Information must also be taught well.

Humility as a function of learning. A person who is humble will be ready to admit when they do not know something and stay within their areas of competence. People who are humble build trust. People who are humble will also be open to new ideas and understand that we can learn much from others. The key to being humble is keeping an attitude that there is always something to be learned.

Starting a discussion group.

Proverbs 27:17 says that "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. (ESV) As people, we have an amazing capacity to sharpen each other. In teams we see this all the time, a group of motivated people with a common goal. The power of teamwork is also called synergy. Synergy by definition is: The interaction of two or more agents or forces so that their combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual effects. In mathematical terms, it means that $1 + 1$ is greater than 2. In other words, Synergy occurs when the output is greater than the sum of the parts. When things work together to create an outcome that is more valuable than the total of all individual inputs, synergy is manifested.

The idea of starting Integrity groups is precisely for this purpose. Individuals in positions of influence who can come together to support each other and contribute their individual ideas, and learn from each other. By having a forum to share ideas and a group to encourage each other, the outcome can be a dramatic impact on society, on business, in government, and every other area of life. It will also greatly impact the church for God's glory.

How many people know exactly what to do, but don't do it? As an individual we may make promises to ourselves as we desire to grow personally. However we may run into some difficulties or challenges along the way and decide it isn't worth the effort. It would be easy for us to give up. And, since nobody knew about our initial promise, we think there is no harm done. Actually, if we lack trust in ourselves, then it is harder for us to trust others. By having a discussion group we can develop accountability partners that will help us move forward in challenging times.

Teams are effective especially if you want to get the best out of yourself and have the biggest impact.

Read to learn.

Unfortunately good books or reading material may be hard to find or unavailable in some areas. If you are part of a group, this would be a great opportunity to share books and other materials with each other. It would also be a good way to filter material, making sure that the content is consistent with solid biblical doctrine and promotes good theology. John C. Maxwell is a noted Christian author who has written a lot on leadership. He once said that "Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers". We can learn a lot through others teaching and experiences. God has given different people gifts in different areas and many have shared their understanding with others through their writing.

One of my hopes in this discussion group is to provide opportunity for different members to share their thoughts and experiences with others by giving them a place to publish their writings.

Choosing what to read. For many there are lots of things we can read, some that can be purely entertaining and some that will provide nourishment for our souls and for personal and professional development. As leaders we need to make sure we get good

nourishment. With the internet being available to many today there is a lot of good educational and encouraging material available, but there is a lot of rubbish out there as well. It is easy for social media to consume a lot of time without providing much in the way of healthy input. We must use our time wisely if we want to grow in competency.

Mentoring.

A Mentor, is defined as a wise and trusted counselor. The Bible talks a lot about mentoring, In 2 Timothy 2:2, Timothy is instructed by Paul to pass on what he has learned from him, to faithful men. Proverbs 27:17, the phrase mentioned above, "Iron sharpens Iron" talks about people learning from each other. Proverbs 22:6 tells us to train up a child in the way he should go, and Titus 2:3,4 tells older women to teach younger women. By the very nature of the instruction given by scripture, we can assume that in each of these instances, the potential "receivers" of the instruction are being told to listen.

In life we have the opportunities to be both mentors, advisors and counselors, as well as "mentees", receivers of instruction and wisdom. We can and should be both at the same time.

One of the hopes of Integrity Groups, is that members would take a strong interest in helping others to grow in different areas where they have experience and wisdom. In the realm of faith we often refer to mentoring as discipling, but there are many other areas of life where people can benefit from mentoring. Successful business people can come along side younger people or those starting out to help them become successful in business, helping them with basic business practices and helping them to understand how to apply godly principles in the business world. Godly police could help others in law enforcement understand the importance of law and order for a society to be blessed. Many years ago I enjoyed the wisdom of a specialist in public speaking who helped me learn to communicate publicly well.

The possibilities are endless. The goal is to glorify God, develop a believable witness, strengthen the church, participate in growing God's Kingdom, and as a side benefit, improve the quality of life for all to enjoy.

Too often we tend to pursue life and personal goals on our own. God does not intend for His people to live this way but to be able to work together and support each other. Consider being a mentor or look for someone who might be able to mentor you.

Being a Mentor.

David Horsager: "Good mentors know how to mix listening and encouragement with open and honest challenge. It is not thinking that you know everything, or that you will fill your mentee with great knowledge and wisdom. It is about listening, encouraging, sharing experiences that relate, and asking good questions".

A Mentor Could.....

- **Help assess strengths and weaknesses.**
- **Work to develop skills for success.**
- **Demonstrate trust, openness, and honesty.**
- **Work through career and workplace challenges.**
- **Give fresh perspective.**
- **Demonstrate a positive outlook.**
- **Facilitate decision-making processes.**
- **Inspire greatness.**
- **Suggest but not force ideas.**
- **Give honest and constructive feedback.**
- **Show neutrality and be objective.**
- **Help develop self-awareness**
- **Listen attentively and objectively.**
- **Demonstrate emotional intelligence.**
- **Help with networking.**

A Mentor must not.....

- **Be a personal counselor.**
- **Bring you to an inappropriate level of dependence.**
- **Do the work you are supposed to do.**
- **Attempt to solve your problems.**
- **Invest in your business or ideas.**

Being Mentored.

How to find a Mentor.....

- **Does your church or organization have a formal mentorship program?**
- **Identify people you respect and admire.**
- **Determine what you need, and look for someone with those skills.**
- **Identify the mentor's communication style.**
- **Make sure you have shared values.**
- **Find a person you can talk freely with about your career, workplace, or faith issues.**
- **Make sure the person wants to help you become your best self, and not someone else.**
- **Look for someone regarded as a role model.**
- **Consider people who are trustworthy and can keep information confidential.**

A Mentee should.....

- **Be honest.**
- **Be open in communicating.**
- **Be trustworthy.**
- **Keep confidences.**
- **Be introspective; looking at ones self honestly.**
- **Work under realistic expectations.**
- **Stay accountable.**
- **Admit mistakes and share failures.**

Competency

- Create a regular plan for staying competent and capable.
- Humility is the first step in learning.
- Stretch your mind with new ideas, fresh thoughts, and different viewpoints.
- Find a group of professionals with whom you can grow and sharpen one another. (Integrity Group)
- Accept accountability in your life.
- Find a mentor who is successful and wise in the same way you would like to be.
- Respect your mentors time and take his or her insights seriously.
- Be intentional with your downtime. Make it a priority to create time to learn and reflect.

Some questions to start discussion.

- **Who would you like to be mentored by? (Also for self reflection)**
- **Who could you mentor?**
- **Does an Integrity Group have a place in your life? If you started one, who would you ask to join it?**
- **Who keeps you accountable?**
- **How do you keep learning?**
- **Do you as a leader, enable learning?**
- **What can you do to maintain or increase your own competency?**
- **Would it be valuable to have a retreat or special gathering for the sake of rejuvenation, refreshing, morale, and innovation?**