



Article from

## **The Stepping Stone**

August 2016

Issue 63

# CAREER DEVELOPMENT

## Leadership Inspiration: “Nothing to Prove, Only to Share”

By Stephanie Calandro

*Editor’s Note: In the Leadership & Development Section’s Leadership Inspiration Contest, entrants were asked to tell us what inspired them to be better actuarial leaders. Here is an entry from the “Leadership Quote” category.*

The outlook that we have “nothing to prove, only to share,” inspires me to be a better actuarial leader. Though this idea is attributed to American choreographer Alvin Alley, it is broadly applicable outside of both the choreographic and actuarial realms.

One of the aspects I enjoy most about being an actuary is working collaboratively on teams, both with colleagues and clients. It is commonly known that a well-functioning team is stronger and more effective than the sum of its components, and also that impactful leaders guide others to self-recognition of their own strengths and attributes.

These two truths, considered within the framework that everyone offers something to share with one another, drive me to be a better leader. I approach personal interactions with the mindset that I will learn something from each new acquaintance; however, it would be selfish to expect this without my willingness to give myself generously to every individual I encounter.

Establishing excellent rapport is a first step toward eliminating the barrier of feeling that one must “prove” himself or herself. This enables open communication whereby ideas are freely shared, which, in turn, begins building trust and buy-in within a team. The point at which this trust has been built is when a team becomes stronger than the sum of its components.

Collaborative brainstorming encourages new ideas to build off those presently at hand, with each proposal being considered, the associated pros and cons being identified and discussed, and it being accepted, reworked or discarded. Each team member’s individual perspective informs this process and allows a course of action to take shape.

Once a clear plan has been identified, the phase of determining its execution encourages team members to reflect on their own strengths and areas for opportunity, as well as those of their



teammates. Within the team’s solid foundation of trust and communications, participants willingly offer promotion, encouragement and support of fellow team members. By this stage, relationships have formed that cause participants to have a vested interest in each other’s individual success as well as the greater common objective of effectively executing the team’s plan.

As projects and processes change courses, the collaborative brainstorming and execution phases may be revisited, revised and/or recreated. However, maintaining the perspective that both my collaborators and I have something to share with each other—for both the individual and greater good—fosters an environment of open ears and minds that can collectively surmount any challenge we encounter. ■



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