



Two Good Ideas *and a Postscript*

Some Leadership Thoughts...

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The Thing about Good Ideas...

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- **Problems** seek creative solutions and leadership involves finding and executing them
- Not all good (sometimes GREAT) ideas land in a supportive political environment
- Sometimes leaders can significantly change that political environment, sometimes not
- Sometimes it is best to leave the idea alone for a while, not keep pushing it.
- The execution of the idea is as critical as finding the idea itself, and much harder

Discuss each of the Two Ideas:

- How was the idea conceived?
- What problems did it address?
- Was it successful (why and how do we know?)
- or
- Why did it flounder (and why?)

And a final Postscript



IDEA ONE



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Seminars on Global Forestry for Forest Service Leadership

- 2003-2008 USFS held 5 seminars on Global Forestry in Oaxaca, Mexico
- Nearly all 65 Senior Executives in the USFS attended
- Topics: Trends in global trade; emergence of non-market forces: certification, payments for ecosystem services, business sustainability principles; community forestry, regulatory reforms around world



Idea One: Global Seminars for USFS Leaders

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What problem was it designed to solve?

- Forestry was changing quickly around the world, leadership in USFS was unaware of much of it, *yet was affecting it and affected by it (without knowing it)*
- Goal: Deepening the understanding of how the US forestry fits in the global forestry world: who are we selling to, buying from; what ideas are we exporting? What aren't we learning?

Was it successful? Yes.

- Influenced many of our long-term strategies: ecosystem services, planning rule, climate policy, certification...
- Gave context and provided understanding to the changing US timber market and the role played by both public and private lands
- Provided time for top leaders to reflect, away from the pressures of daily life...essential to great leadership
- Expanded to include senior leaders in agriculture



Chief Tidwell, Oaxaca 2007

Why Successful?

- Had political support (Chief, Under Secretary) and no major political detractors
- Took people outside the US—Oaxaca, Mexico. A different culture reinforced the theme and was essential to the program's success
- Built rigorous metrics to support the program

Idea One: Global Seminars for USFS Leaders, cont

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Would it be successful today? Probably not.

- Would have many detractors (congress/press)
- Agency leadership would not have the support of the political leadership—too much risk and exposure



IDEA TWO

USDA Office of Environmental Markets

- Established in 2008 to promote private markets for water quality, carbon, and biodiversity
- Goal to provide additional income for private landowners in the US for conserving resources critical to society and restore key ecosystem services



How was it conceived?

- In Oaxaca Seminars, to changes in law (Farm Bill 2008)

What problem was it designed to solve?

- We are losing valuable ecosystem services to development, in part because values like clean water, clean air, and wildlife habitat have no “market value”.
- By developing these new markets, a “market signal” or value could be established, better enabling these key resources to compete with other land uses, like agriculture.
- Small markets for air, water, and biodiversity exist, but they are scattered across government agencies, inconsistently applied, and very difficult and confusing for land owners to participate in.

Was it successful? Yes and No

- We gained great support and credibility in our first year, by doing strategically focused, quality work, efficiently delivered.
- We had incredible external support from collaborators, which gave us tremendous political capital.
- Still continues 3 years after establishment although changed
- Has not provided the promise hoped for, yet.
 - Lack of political support, lack of budget
 - In a holding pattern
- Requires a new and bold interagency governance model to take these markets to scale/realize results.

What did I learn?

I underestimated the magnitude of two issues:

- 1. The political transition in 2009**—new political appointees viewed the office as a product of the last administration (not as a GREAT idea!). I was a career professional, not a political appointee, but was viewed as one by some.
- 2. The difficulty of standing up a new office** (get a budget, hire staff, find office space, buy computers, set up protocols...) **and** do the work (meet with landowner groups, congressional staff, market designers, other agencies; give presentations; develop work products, etc..

What can we learn from all of this?

Conclusions

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- Lots of problems persist for
 - lack of creative ideas to solve them
 - or lack of political will
 - or ill-conceived plans for execution
- We usually “stumble on” creative ideas accidentally. But you can create conditions into which they emerge...
- Implementing new ideas requires a very thoughtful, strategic approach
- Forest agencies around the world are heavily influenced by politics, so leaders must learn these lessons well
- External groups can help – provide “political cover”, lobby for you for resources, carry-out some of the work, provide ideas and support
- Relationships bring opportunities we can’t imagine at the time



Post-Script...

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Balance is critical to being successful in both a professional and personal life.

Personal Needs/Issues

- *aging parents*
- *young children*
- *time for sports/recreation/vacation*
- *personal difficulties—family, job, financial*

Family and friends sustain you...



Relationships provide opportunities we cannot imagine at the time....

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