

NOAA Technical Memorandum NWS SR-217

**BUILDING LEADERS FOR A SOLID TOMORROW (BLAST) - INITIAL  
EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPANTS**

Jon W. Zeitler  
WFO Houston/Galveston  
Dickinson, Texas

John Gordon  
WFO Nashville  
Old Hickory, Tennessee

Tim Troutman  
Climate, Water and Weather Division, SRH  
Fort Worth, Texas

Hector Guerrero  
WFO Brownsville  
Brownsville, Texas

Scientific Services Division  
Southern Region  
Fort Worth, Texas

February 2002



## **1. Introduction**

The NWS Southern Region has established a training program to invest in and develop a pool of potential National Weather Service leaders. This program is formulated around the interest of employees to improve their leadership talents. The foundation of BLAST (Building Leaders for a Solid Tomorrow) is field and regional headquarters leaders sharing their progressive leadership knowledge and concepts with all BLAST participants. Through continued investment in the leadership qualities of Southern Region employees, the local office, region, and NWS will evolve toward the most progressive leadership concepts in the future. Additionally, BLAST will be a harmonic complement to the NOAA/NWS Diversity and EEO program and share its goals. Local office Southern Region field leaders are critical to BLAST, since they are in a good position to identify and nurture local leadership talents and mentor others on a day-to-day basis.

The goal of BLAST is to develop as many future leaders as possible. Some of these future leaders may advance to become office leaders, but BLAST is designed to grow future leaders at all levels of the organization. Any individual, whether a focal point, team or office manager will benefit from participation in BLAST. Current supervisors are not eligible for Southern Region BLAST, and participation in BLAST does not in any way provide participants priority consideration in future recruitment actions. Southern Region BLAST participants may bridge to the NWS Senior Leadership Potential Program, but Southern Region BLAST is not a prerequisite.

The objectives of BLAST are for participants to develop the knowledge, skills and abilities to foster growth and entrepreneurial mentality in meeting the NWS mission, the challenge of change, thinking outside the box, leading by serving, translating NWS core values into day-to-day reality, and planning for the future. This program will be built around two independent components- one at the local office level (which already exists in some offices), and another more formal version at the regional level.

For the authors and other participants, one of their most rewarding training experiences with the National Weather Service occurred the week of June 10-15, 2001, as 11 participants and seven facilitators met in Atlanta for the first NWS Southern Region BLAST workshop. BLAST is an appropriate acronym as the program quickly developed in May 2001 and reached a milestone with the Atlanta workshop. This document describes the initial phase of BLAST, reviews four books on the foundation of leadership and change, and summarizes the Atlanta workshop. One key for all leadership activities is to know there are no absolute answers - we learn from each other. The following sections should be viewed in that perspective.

## **2. Background Reading**

Eleven Southern Region employees were competitively selected in early 2001 to participate in BLAST. In April 2001, the BLAST selectees were provided three books to prepare them for the workshop. The first three books were pre-requisites for the course, while the book *Enlightened Leadership* was assigned after the BLAST workshop was completed. Each book highlights different perspectives or aspects of leadership and change - cementing the notion that there is no leadership prescription for all situations or for all personalities. Three overarching themes emerged from these references:

1. Communication is vital. No matter what skills, ideas, vision, or plans a person or group may have, they must be able to effectively communicate for success to follow.
2. Action is required. Similar to communication, no matter what skills, ideas, vision or plans a person or group may have, they must act to effect any change. The simple equation: *Intentions - Action = Squat* says it all.
3. Leadership is service for others. Too many have the notion that leadership is grandifying the self. In reality, effective leaders serve those they are leading. Following are reviews of the four leadership books used in the BLAST training program.

### ***Leading Change***

*Leading Change*, by John P. Kotter (1996), is an excellent blueprint for successful organizations in the 21st Century. Pressures on the NWS and other organizations will increase - one should develop a plan for the future and get there before the competition. *Leading Change* explains how previous attempts to change companies succeeded or failed. Various management and leadership paradigms such as total quality management, re-engineering, right-sizing, restructuring, cultural change, and turnarounds have routinely fallen short of goals because these plans fail to alter behavior.

It is important to understand the difference between management and leadership. Kotter defines management as “a set of processes that can keep a complicated system of people and technology running smoothly.” Leadership is defined as “a set of processes that create organizations in the first place or adapt them to significantly changing circumstances.” Leadership defines what the future should look like, aligns people with that vision, and inspires them to make it happen. A group or team comprising good managers but poor leaders will not succeed.

Kotter outlines an eight-step process every company, including the NWS, must go through to achieve successful change. He indicates where and how people often fail to complete organizational change. The eight steps for creating major change are:

1. *Establishing a sense of urgency.* Examine the market and competitive realities, identify and discuss crises, potential crises or major opportunities. Supplanting complacency is a key factor for successful change.
2. *Creating the guiding coalition.* Put together a group with enough power to lead the change and get the group to work together as a team.
3. *Developing a Vision and Strategy.* Create a vision to direct the change effort and develop strategies for achieving that vision.
4. *Communicating the Change Vision.* Use every means possible to constantly communicate the new vision and strategies. Utilize the guiding coalition role model behaviors supporting the change.

5. *Empowering Broad-Based Action.* Get rid of obstacles; exemplify or eliminate systems or structures that undermine the change vision; encourage risk taking and nontraditional ideas, activities, or actions.
6. *Generating Short Term Wins.* Plan for visible improvements in performance, or “wins;” create those wins and visibly recognize and reward people who made them possible.
7. *Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change.* Use increased credibility to change all systems, structures, and policies that don’t fit the transformation vision. This includes hiring, developing, and promoting people who can implement the change vision.
8. *Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture.* Create better performance through customer- and productivity-oriented behaviors, more and better leadership, and more effective management. In addition, articulate the connections between new behaviors and organizational success, and develop the means to ensure leadership development and succession.

The change process can fail at any one of the preceding steps. Kotter identifies eight paralleling failures. The first four are: allowing too much complacency, failing to create a sufficient powerful guiding coalition, underestimating the power of vision, and under-communicating the vision by a factor of ten. Many change efforts fail with these first four steps. However, even those that get a successful start can perish through one of the remaining four mistakes: permitting obstacles to block the new vision, failing to create short term wins, declaring victory too soon, and neglecting to anchor changes within the organizational culture. Kotter notes that the consequences involving these errors are: poorly implemented new strategies, acquisitions not achieving expected synergies, lengthy re-engineering, downsizing without cost savings, and quality programs falling short of benchmarks.

Vision is essential to successfully create change within an organization. Kotter defines vision as “a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future.” Vision clarifies the general direction for change, thereby simplifying hundreds or thousands of more detailed decisions. Vision also serves to facilitate major changes by motivating action that is not necessarily in the organization’s short-term self-interests. Vision helps align individuals, thus coordinating the actions of motivated people in a remarkably efficient way. Communication is vital in the vision process. If the vision is properly communicated, employees become empowered to successfully complete the task at hand.

To develop a winning NWS or other organization in the future, Kotter describes the ideal structure that can achieve the goals set forth by an excellent vision statement. The organization should be: non-bureaucratic, have minimal rules and levels of management, organized for management to lead, and managed at lowest-level possible by employees closest to the customer. The organizational structure should also be characterized by policies and procedures that produce the minimal internal interdependence to successfully serve customers.

A successful twenty-first century organization will depend on performance information systems to widely distribute performance data and offer management training and support systems to all portions of the company as well as customers. The culture of a successful organization should be oriented to the customer, empowering, quick to make decisions, open and candid, and more risk-tolerant. The authors believe the National Weather Service has to embrace these concepts to remain progressive to survive in this rapidly changing business, technological, and customer-oriented world.

### ***From Worst to First***

In 1994, Continental Airlines was simply the worst among the nation's ten biggest airlines. The airline was despised by travelers, employees, and shareholders. Continental had not made a profit in ten years. Employee morale was near rock bottom. The company had ten CEOs in ten years, went into Chapter 11 Bankruptcy twice in the preceding decade, and was on the verge of going broke again. To help salvage the company, Continental hired a Boeing executive named Gordon Bethune. After assuming his new position, Bethune (1998) commented in this book "We weren't just the worst airline. We lapped the field. We had problems where we flew, what we flew, how we flew, and with who was flying."

Bethune devised a *Go Forward Plan*, which had four parts - The Market Plan, Financial Plan, Product Plan, and People Plan. He realized that all four had to be addressed constantly and simultaneously. The specifics of each component include:

#### **The Market Plan "*Fly to Win.*"**

1. Fly to Win is about Continental's market: determining a target market, making the product fit the market in price and position, finding the amenities customers want and will pay for, and making it easy for customers to get the product.
2. Stop doing things that don't make money.

#### **The Financial Plan "*Fund the Future.*"**

1. The key to financial health is simple: Know what's going on. Determine where to reinvest and where to pull out.
2. Renegotiated leases, postponed payments, and refinanced large debts, leading to a \$45 million profit in 1995.
3. Better information, greater understanding, more control, better decisions.

#### **The Product Plan "*Make Reliability a Reality.*"**

1. Continental wasn't going to be successful until they had a product they were proud to sell. The only way to provide a service was enticing the employees to *want* to provide it.

2. Instituted a \$65 bonus to each team member when Continental was in the top half of airlines in the percentage of flights arriving on time.
3. Everything was based on making the product better, as defined by customers.

#### The People Plan "*Working Together.*"

1. This was the *most important* part of the plan! Made a corporate goal to change how people treated each other, found ways to measure and reward cooperation rather than infighting, and encouraged and rewarded trust, and confidence.
2. Every part of the team does a job - any part that fails can impair or destroy the function of the entire entity.
3. Employees were allowed to do their jobs - they wanted second guessing to stop.
4. Addressed performance problems and improved the way it felt to come to work.

Bethune showed employees things were different. He unlocked the executive suite and began open houses at the corporate headquarters. He instituted casual dress on Fridays and during the summer for most employees. His new rule for all meetings - they start and end on time. He told his employees the truth, no matter what the news was. He began holding employee meetings twice a year throughout the continental organization. Bethune spread the news through weekly voice-mail messages, newsletters and magazines. He directed some employees to burn outdated work manuals in the parking lot. He then sent word into the field that employees should use their judgment and not blindly follow manuals. When faced with an atypical situation, employees were instructed to do what was right for the customer and right for the company; balance the interests and use good judgment to solve the problem.

He hired first rate executives. Specifically he says: "If you want great performance, you're going to have to pay for it. We hired talent and team players. I wanted risk takers and achievers." He simplified the Continental fleet by removing planes with special requirements. He went to his creditors and lessors and accepted responsibility for the past ten years of mistakes. Bethune gave them reason to believe things would improve, then hoped for the best. He replaced financial systems, trained people to follow them, and hired the right people to manage them. He counseled poorly performing employees, giving them a chance to get on board with company's direction or *leave!* Some of Bethune's quotes regarding change include:

*The first step in solving any problem is deciding whose problem it is. What does it cost not to fix it?*

*Not admitting mistakes is what causes organizations to get sick.*

*One definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over in exactly the same way and expecting different results.*

*My definition of a leader is pretty simple. The leader is the person who looks at the big picture and says, "Okay, everybody, go west! Now west is precisely a compass heading of 270 degrees, but anywhere from around 240 to 300 degrees is heading generally west. So if I say go west, and one person is heading at 295 degrees, that is ok with me. On the other hand, the guy who is going 90 degrees, which is due east, is a problem. Maybe he needs to go to a company that is headed east, but he is not going to work out here unless he can go west with the rest of us.*

*A boss's job- a leaders job- is to facilitate, not to control. You have to trust people to do their jobs. That's the strongest leadership there is- trusting your employees.*

*Probably the most important management principle there is: What you measure and reward is what you get. Most simply, what gets measured gets done.*

Evidence of the Continental Airlines turnaround in one year is the following:

- Lost \$204 million in 1994.
- Made \$202 million in 1995.
- Made \$556 million in 1996.
- Selected as stock of the year by *Business Week* in 1995.
- Won J.D. Power Award as best airline of 500 miles or more in 1996.
- *Air Transport World* named Continental the 1996 Airline of the Year.

### ***The Servant***

*The Servant*, by James C. Hunter (1998), is a very practical book which shows how to put others first. It teaches a paradigm that is bottom up, not top down. This book stresses the importance of walking your talk and true customer service. The author believes that these principles of leadership, if practiced throughout the NWS, will revolutionize the NWS by putting our employees and our customers first.

*The Servant* can be read in one sitting. It can change your heart to help you become a very effective leader. The storyline is about John Daily, a businessman whose outwardly successful life is spiraling out of control. He is failing miserably in each of his leadership roles as boss, husband, father, and coach. To get his life back on track, he reluctantly attends a week-long leadership retreat at a remote Benedictine monastery with a small group of others in leadership positions.

To John's surprise, the monk leading the seminar is a former business executive and Wall Street legend. Taking John under his wing, the monk guides him to a profound realization: the foundation of leadership is not power, but authority; authority built upon relationships, love, service, and sacrifice.

The monk teaches the principles of how to unselfishly serve and love others including those entrusted to your care. The monk modeled and taught these timeless truths that are best exemplified in *The Bible*. They can be summed up as - all the good intentions in the world don't mean a thing if they don't line up with our actions." The abbreviated form would be: *Intentions - Actions =*

*Squat.* Serve and love are verbs - we must do them in order to become effective leaders. We must walk our talk.

A leader must think first about the needs of others before he or she thinks about his or her own needs. According to the author, this will at times require sacrifice, but reap huge rewards. When you think of BLAST, remember “Be-last and let others be-first.”

### ***Enlightened Leadership***

*Enlightened Leadership* (Oakley and Krug, 1991) describes how to break through the paradigms and barriers a leader encounters. The Foreword and first three chapters include discussion of the typical challenges a leader faces when implementing change, including the psychology or mind set of those resisting the change.

In order to cope with the changes organizations must make to remain viable, good leaders do three things. First, they provide *permission* for their people to try new things, to “get outside of the box.” Second, they provide *protection*, shielding their people and ideas from the corporate immune systems whose trying to “kill” anything that is new, different, or viewed as a mistake. Finally, leaders provide their people *processes* to solve problems. When individuals have *permission*, *protection*, and *processes* they flourish.

Even with a basic commitment change, many organizations still deal with the symptoms of problems, rather than their root cause. Symptoms are many times viewed as hard (measurable) issues such as poor quality, sales, and customer service. In reality, they mask the soft (human) issues attitudes and mindsets that are the root problems. However, treating the soft issues is the only way to provide meaningful and effective solutions.

The next three chapters focus on the psychology and strategies for overcoming resistance to change. The first major concept is the 80/20 rule: 80% of a group will be resistant to change; 20% will be open to change. These two groups could be categorized as *creative* (80%) and *reactive* (20%) thinkers. Reactive thinkers equate change to something wrong with them; creative thinkers see change as an opportunity or challenge. In short, each of us can change our own attitude, but we can only influence others - they must choose themselves. In this context, leadership is creating an environment that enhances our co-workers self-images.

Given the 80/20 rule, how does one promote creative thinking - the positive 20 percent? Oakley and Krug advance the Net Forward Energy Enhancing Ratio (NeFER) paradigm: the ratio of productive energy moving us toward our objective divided by the counter-productive energy holding us back. For example, if one spends 60% effort working toward an objective, but 40% focusing on problems or limitations, the NeFER would be  $60/40=1.5$ . In contrast, suppose if one spent 90% effort on the objective and 10% on the problems, the NeFER would be  $90/10=9.0$ . Clearly, focusing attention on the productive energy side of NeFER can yield dramatic benefits.

The next three chapters discuss misconceptions between employees and management, and how to address them. A leader's goal should be to move people from the disempowered state of reactive thinking to the empowered state of creative thinking. Effective Questions (EQs) take empowerment and effectiveness to a far higher level than any separate concept. EQs are the single most valuable empowerment tool within any renewing organization. This concept combines the power of focusing on positive results with the power of asking questions. By asking effective questions, we empower our employees, creating a willingness to work together to pursue change, solutions or objectives with minimal, if any, resistance. The primary result is to help individuals understand that their biggest limitations are within themselves, not from external sources.

The goal of the empowerment process is to support people involving the establishment of new, effective thinking patterns to replace old, ineffective ones. Enlightened leaders are clear about having a deep, clearly understood sense of purpose or mission. This includes a mission that incorporates a vision of what the organization stands for, or strives to create what is inspiring and elevating to the team members and a mission that is shared by the team. Having a vision inspires people to look at the possibilities of going beyond what is wrong and what, in the past, have been limitations, overcoming the problems and accomplishing the mission. A successful vision must grow out of the needs of the entire organization and must be claimed or owned by all the important actors within the organization. This shared purpose and vision must come from the inner heart of the organization and the key to vision and change involves asking EQs and listening.

Once the concepts of NeFER and EQs are established, application of them to typical business scenarios can demonstrate their effectiveness. The final three chapters summarize the entire process and provide standard examples and the likely outcomes. The first business scenario is that of a renewal in quality - trying to establish or improve the quality of products or services. In this case, the key is development of a Total Quality Consciousness (TQC) - which arranges the importance of quality and a desire to improve it in all aspects of work. The focus is on fixing processes, not the people. Start with what is working and brainstorm how to build on that success, rather than develop a negative, problem-based mind set.

The second scenario is a renewal in customer service. Tom Peters states "There are only two reasons for being in business; to serve the customer and to stay in business so we can serve the customer." The key concept behind that quote is that customers are both internal and external - which is very important in creating enthusiasm and commitment to improve.

The third scenario is renewal in continuous improvement. This is derived from the first two scenarios - primarily to refocus employees on what can be done to make something better, rather than on the reasons why something won't work.

The final scenario is a renewal in sales. Customers want an adequate solution, a trusted consultant, value-added quality, and a long-term relationship. They don't want all the bells and whistles, distrust, limited-use products, or jumping from vendor to vendor. Sales staff need to realize these points and one salient one - customers generally do not resist their own ideas; they buy into them.

Leadership and power in the new paradigm are tied together in the Enlightened Leader - one who can combine vision and awareness. Everyone has a vision, their preferred future, drawing it out of them requires leadership, and even then the task can be difficult. Similarly, awareness is easier said than done. Some aspects of awareness include: 1) accepting the most important factor in an organization's success is its people; 2) the extent to which people feel cared about and supported is proportional to the effort they put in; 3) there is tremendous power in numbers. In summary, enlightened leaders do the following:

1. Support people and develop an inspiring, compelling vision
2. Provide the positive disciplines necessary for bringing out the best in people.
3. Put people first.
4. Model self responsibility.
5. Maintain high expectations for results.

### **3. Atlanta BLAST Workshop**

The background provided by Bethune, Kotter, and Hunter books was a vital base for the Atlanta Workshop to build upon. The following sections summarize each unit of the workshop. What cannot be conveyed easily in writing was the spirit of camaraderie between the facilitators and participants. This spirit was quickly developed at a Sunday evening icebreaker and continued through the ending luncheon, and to the present. The willingness to participate in active listening and be open to diverse ideas made for a rich learning environment.

#### ***Fundamentals of BLAST - Gary Grice (Deputy Director, SRH)***

The workshop opened with a presentation by Gary Grice on the fundamentals of the BLAST program, with a particular focus on the workshop. The need for BLAST is evident - a significant number of leaders and managers within the NWS will retire in the next 5-10 years. Many potential leaders are early on in their careers - but will they be ready to effectively replace the retiring leaders? More important, can the current leadership ensure the future leaders' success by providing training and mentoring now? BLAST was developed to answer these questions on both the local, regional, and hopefully national level. The goals of BLAST are straightforward: to assist NWS employees to become the best leaders they can possibly be; to look within (develop and change) themselves, and to become ambassadors of good leadership not only for the organization, but for their families, communities, and NWS customers and partners.

Obviously, becoming a leader in all areas of one's life is not a one-time event or a task to be completed. Rather, it's a lifelong learning process. BLAST can quicken the learning curve that life experience provides, without some of the negative consequences. In other words, we can learn from others' successes and mistakes. Gary summarized leadership in the following points:

1. BLAST is a beginning, not the end.
2. Many paths exist to good leadership and all are under construction.
3. Leadership is a behavior; not a position.
4. To be effective, good leadership must be demonstrated and shared.

5. Good leaders do not just react to change, they create change.
6. You can always find examples of poor leadership; they are not an excuse to avoid exercising good leadership.
7. You can exercise good leadership over those areas you have influence.

***Foundation of Good Leadership - Bart Hagemeyer (MIC, WFO Melbourne)***

Bart followed with a presentation on the foundations of good leadership. The overriding message was to always be aware of your environment, others around you, and your actions, because these are the ingredients to exercise leadership. Many times we forget how we got into our current situation, the decisions we made, actions we took, etc. One major component of leadership is the simple awareness that you have great influence over others, your family, co-workers, neighbors and community. Specific summary messages illustrating awareness, its opportunities, and consequences include:

1. Are you striving to reach your potential? How important is momentum? How you do generate momentum?
2. Being a leader involves risk and takes courage - others depend on you.
3. In what aspects of your life are you already a leader? Work? Family? Community?
4. In the past (and present?) Many people promoted into management and leadership positions may have been promoted because of technical or task expertise and were not prepared for their new roles. How can you be prepared?
5. Common leadership assumptions:
  - Leaders are born, not made - Wrong! Leadership is a behavior and can be learned.
  - The leader controls, directs, manipulates - Wrong! Leadership should not be an exercise of power, but of enabling others.
  - Leadership exists only at the top - Wrong! Leadership opportunities exist everywhere in the organization.
  - Everyone can become a great leader - Right! Magnify your strengths, diminish your weaknesses.

***Leadershift Video - Joel Barker, American Media, Inc.***

A video called *Leadershift* by Joel Barker was shown to the group. Mr. Barker made the following seven points:

1. A leader is someone you choose to follow to a place you wouldn't go by yourself.
2. Leaders find, recognize, and secure the future.
3. More than anything else, leaders build bridges that help us move from where we are to where we need to be.

4. The bridges are built on pillars of courage, commitment, communication, compassion, trust, loyalty, integrity, and inspiration.
5. Good managers do things right, good leaders do the right things.
6. Managing is about efficiency, leading is about effectiveness.
7. Management is about how, leadership is about what and why.

***Understanding the Leader Within You - Walt Hogan (International Training Associates, ITA)***

Walt Hogan followed with a session on uncovering the attributes of leadership, which each individual values. The utility of the session and exercises within it underscored the main points that there are different leadership styles, that each person has different paradigms of what leadership means to them, and that analysis and understanding of leadership attributes allows each person to develop those attributes and apply them as necessary in leadership roles. Each participant and facilitator answered a series of questions which were used to develop a personal leadership profile. The profile was subdivided into four areas: Character, Analysis, Interaction, and Accomplishment. Each area was further divided into three dimensions as follows:

<u>Character</u>	<u>Analysis</u>	<u>Accomplishment</u>	<u>Interaction</u>
enthusiasm	fortitude	performance	collaborating
integrity	perceiving	boldness	inspiring
self-renewal	judgment	team building	servicing others

Walt facilitated small and large group discussions and exercises for further examination of individual profiles. He summarized the following points:

1. Followers choose their leaders - and their choices may change.
2. Everyone can be a leader - what is your circle of influence?
3. All become servants when it's time to change.
4. You will lead where your attention is.

***Giving and Seeking Feedback - José Garcia (MIC, WFO Amarillo, Texas)***

José Garcia built on the previous sessions by describing how feedback is one of the most effective tools for a leader to be successful. Feedback is important because it gives the leader the ability to create positive, trusting relationships, clarifies or sets positive perceptions, and serves as a slow down mechanism to stay grounded with those around you. One tool for increasing feedback is to consider your personal Johari Window (named after the creators Joe Luft and Harry Ingram). The Johari window is a 2x2 matrix of what you know about yourself (e.g., attitudes, beliefs, biases) and what others know about you. The four areas are:

Known/Known - an area where you know yourself well as do others - effective leaders likely have a large area - an "Open Johari Window."

**Known/Unknown** - an area where you don't know yourself but others do - think of this as a blind spot which could cripple the leader or result in poor decisions made by the leader.

**Unknown/Known** - an area where you know more about yourself than others - closet skeletons, biases, and other "personal" issues reside here. A large area here might result in the leader's words and actions out of alignment since the actions are more likely to be based on the portions others don't know about.

**Unknown/Unknown** - neither you nor others know your true capabilities - leadership is unlikely.

The goal is to have a large, open Johari Window - meaning that you know yourself and others can trust you by knowing you. Creating an open Johari Window includes:

1. Ask! Find out more about yourself and others.
2. Really listen - silence is golden.
3. Be willing to use feedback for self-improvement.
4. Avoid misinterpretation and defensiveness.

How does one provide sensitive feedback for others?

1. Spend time on "miracles"
  - a. Observe and gather information
  - b. Learn about others
  - c. Realize even positive feedback may be painful to others.
2. Be informal and FAST – Frequent - Accurate - Specific - Timely
3. Validate your feedback
  - a. Is it effectively heard?
  - b. Does it keep the relationship intact and open?
  - c. Practice...Practice...Practice
4. Get rid of ineffective feedback habits
  - a. Do not be stinging
  - b. Avoid attacking and defending
  - c. Don't criticize openly
5. No one feedback mechanism is perfect, seek input from all types of people through any means available.

### ***Speed, Simplicity, and Self-Confidence - Jack Welch, former CEO, General Electric***

The next session was a video interview with Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, who is regarded as one of the best leaders in industry. General Electric is roughly 40 times the size of the NWS in terms of employees and geographically spread throughout the U.S. and the world, yet manages to be a dynamic organization known for innovation, change, customer service, and quality. Some of Welch's key points include:

1. The key is productivity - get people involved.
2. Strive for self-confidence, speed, and simplicity.
3. The three most important things for business are customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and cash flow
4. Boundaryless-ness - most limitations are internal, not external.
5. Customers give job security - companies don't.
6. Companies provide the environment and support for people to take risks and develop.
7. Vision - a shared idea of focus on tomorrow.

***Servant Leader - Lans Rothfus (MIC, WFO Atlanta, Georgia)***

The session on servant leadership seemed the most challenging and rewarding as leadership principles were found to be important in one's personal, as well as professional, life. Lans outlined the basic principles of *The Servant* (Hunter, 1998) and expanded on various sections with illustrations and examples. The main activity was an exercise where each participant related a personal story of how a servant leader affected their life. Each story demonstrated different aspects of servant leadership, yet the profiled leaders had common traits of integrity, high standards, awareness of the human spirit, courage in relationships, and breadth of life experience. Other exercises included the opening of pre-workshop assessments of each participant by family-members, friends, and co-workers, and a pledge to improve servant leader skills in a one or two areas over the next year.

***Developing and Communicating a Vision - Jim Stefkovich (MIC, WFO Jackson, Mississippi)***

Jim led a session on how vision is critically important for effective leadership. However, actually understanding and implementing vision is one of the more difficult tasks a leader faces. Therefore defining vision, deciding if an individual or group needs a vision, how to develop visions as a leader, and how to communicate that vision must be undertaken for a leader to fully utilize vision.

Defining vision can be summarized as finding out where are you going and developing a clear statement of purpose. Deciding if an individual or group needs a vision involves two issues. First, vision is not necessary for some things, such as deciding where to have lunch. Second, vision is necessary for important things, and critical for change. Developing vision as a leader involves assessing the significance of the need, understanding of greater personal/professional/ agency goals, being open to possibilities, developing relationships, and painting the picture of the vision for others. Communicating vision relates to understanding what others see, knowing how to change or modify perceptions, and repeating the vision in any way that clarifies it for others.

### ***Responding Aggressively to Customer Needs - John Feldt (HIC, Southeast River Forecast Center)***

Once some of the basics on leadership, vision, and change were addressed, the focus shifted to how these ideas can be implemented in the NWS. This session by John focused on leadership to improve customer service, in fact, changing the focus of the NWS entirely toward the customer. John first described a typical scenario of a major winter storm, heat wave, or flood event expected to impact the service area. What is the foundation of the NWS response based on: policies and procedures or customer requirements? In too many cases the answer has been policy, procedure, and product, not the customer.

The New England Confectionary Company (NECCO), the ones who make the candy valentine hearts, was used as an example of customer-focused service. NECCO has been around as long as the NWS, yet manages to blend its heritage with flexibility, nimbleness, and cutting-edge methods to maintain or improve the quality of their products. The questions then for the NWS include: What are our base products? Can we be cutting edge? Are we flexible and nimble? Do we have a "We can do that!" corporate attitude? One important anecdote John relayed is that being cutting edge can be very costly (e.g., high tech companies). A better tack might have the NWS be a fast follower - quickly implementing new technology or ideas once they are shown to be viable and effective.

Assuming the NWS (or at a personal/local level) answers yes to the above questions, then what is the framework for creating a customer-centric organization? John suggested the following: measure value (customer demand vs. cost of production); monitor customer experience constantly, (irregular surveys are not nearly good enough); deliver a total customer experience; and care about your customers and their outcomes.

### ***Leading a Diverse Organization - Crystal Williams (ITA)***

Crystal has worked with NWS on diversity, equal employment opportunity (EEO), and human resources issues. This session capitalized on her experience to help the BLAST participants understand how these issues impact leadership, the organization, our communities, and the participants personally. Crystal began with a history of the employment paradigms the NWS, and to a larger extent the federal government and society have had over the past 30-40 years. The result of legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the culture at that time into the 1980s held the following paradigms (EEO Program Model): people were handled by a "Personnel Department" (e.g., hiring/firing/promotion); the remedy for discrimination was to treat people equally, which was thought to mean the same as fairly; employment security and promotion (especially with the government) were viewed as an entitlement if one performed adequately and remained with the organization a long time.

However, changes in society resulting from globalization, immigration, entry of more women into the workforce, and other factors caused the paradigms to become increasingly ineffective and unrepresentative. Since the late 1980s, the following new paradigms have emerged (Diversity Program Model): people are handled through a "Human Resources Department" - underscoring the need to consider how many issues such as dependent care and health impact employees and their

contribution to the organization. Diversity has become a critical concept both externally (globalization means a more diverse customer base), and internally (employees increasingly come from a varied background). People are different, so treating them equally may not in fact be treating them fairly. Employment security is based on the contribution of the individual - if your contribution is not valued, your job is at stake; individualism has been supplanted by teamwork.

Given the past and present, the big question is where should we go in the future? Does the NWS culture have to change? How? What can you do as a leader to make the changes? To illustrate how a leader should approach these issues, exercises were completed on how to separate fact from inference, and how to apply critical thinking to hypothetical work situations where diversity, culture, and perception pose challenges to successful resolution.

***The leader in a rapidly changing world - Ken Graham (MIC, WFO Birmingham, Alabama)***

Ken led a session on how to understand and develop change. The session began with information on the consequences of not being open to change (increasing irrelevancy, insecurity), and inability to “think outside the box.” In regard to the latter, where does “the box” come from? In most cases, the box is self-imposed and in reality does not exist.

Once one realizes the wide-open possibilities, how does a leader create a positive work environment where people and ideas flourish? Ken presented the *Fish!* video - the motivational story of how the Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle has become a world famous enterprise where the employees love to work and the customers love the service. *Fish!* describes four principles for making an exciting, invigorating workplace where employees feel creative and both employees and customers have a fantastic experience. These four principles are:

1. Play! - Turn tasks into games - make the job fun!
2. Make Their Day! - How do you feel when someone makes your day? How can you make your customers or co-workers day?
3. Be There! - Focus entirely on the person your serving, listen, empathize, laugh with them! Customer service is not just products delivered, but how they are delivered.
4. Choose your attitude! - Can you control your attitude? Do you? How does a positive attitude affect others? A negative attitude?

Ken closed with some rules of thumb on taking risks:

1. Your company (NWS) owes you nothing.
2. Want it? Just ask! If you don't get it, try again!
3. Make everyone else look good.
4. Listen!
5. Observe your surroundings - don't just change, lead change!

***Power through Empowerment - Steven Cooper (Chief, Climate, Water and Weather Division, SRH)***

Steven followed with a session on empowerment. The term empowerment is overused and its meaning a bit cloudy. The purposes of the session were to understand how empowerment differs from delegation, to learn the benefits of empowerment, to understand why information sharing is critical, and to help empower others and avoid sapping their creativity and initiative. The benefits of empowerment include reduced stress, greater productivity, increased visibility within and outside of the organization, self-growth, and greater job satisfaction. Some of the salient points in the presentation and following class discussion include:

1. Empowerment is the freedom to develop from the inside-out.
2. There is a difference between empowerment and delegation. The difference is in the degree of responsibility given to employees (empowerment=more).
3. Supervisors demonstrate empowerment through generosity, trust, vision, confidence, trust, and support of their subordinates.
4. You can be empowering in an unempowered organization by acting in the areas for which you do have authority.

Sharing information is critical to empowerment by:

1. Letting people understand the current situation in clear terms.
2. Building trust throughout the organization.
3. Breaking down hierarchical thinking.
4. Helping people be more responsible.
5. Encouraging people to act like owners of the organization.

The highlight of Steven's session was the presentation of the *ZAPP- The Lightning of Empowerment* video. This video centered around the idea that it is important that we should make sure and positively recognize our co-workers, subordinates and superiors when they do a good job, have a great idea or accomplish a task. This positive feedback without a negative disclaimer at the end of the positive recognition is called a ZAPP. Unsolicited negative feedback toward someone or a lack of recognition for ideas, accomplishments by a co-worker, subordinate or superior is called a SAPP. This video also showed that it is important for each person to have confidence in co-workers to accomplish work tasks and to be receptive to ideas, even if they are not yours.

An important concept gained from this session is that positive recognition for a job well done can definitely lead to better workplace productivity, improved work environment and future successes.

***The Importance of a Personal Network - Ken Graham (MIC, WFO Birmingham, Alabama)***

Ken returned to lead a session on networking. Networking might be likened to glad-handing, a shallow type of interaction with others. In reality, effective networking encompasses many of the traits already demonstrated by good leaders - active listening, a servant-leader paradigm, fulfilling the needs of others, etc. A personal network allows a leader to be effective by providing a base of

support. One component of networking is the PIE principle outlined by career and management expert Harvey Coleman. In short, the PIE principle stands for

Performance ~ 10% Image ~ 30% Exposure ~ 60%

This implies one's standing in a group, organization or community is determined 10% by what an individual does (work performance), 30% by the outward image they maintain, and 60% by getting the message out about what one does (exposure). Again, the temptation is to view this as a get-ahead exercise. Mr. Coleman points out that the 10% from performance is the most critical - image and exposure will not go far if there is no performance. In addition, overexposure could negatively affect your image. Ken added that an improved paradigm might be to view how your interaction in the community alters perceptions about the NWS. For example, being a good neighbor to the sheriff's deputy next door might lead to a more effective relationship between your office and the sheriff's office during severe weather. The key is to understand that the traits of a good leader are the same ones that can deepen these types of relationships in your community.

### ***Turning Failure into Success - Norman Bowles (Director, FAA Logistics Center)***

The capstone of the Atlanta Workshop was a case study on the turnaround of the FAA Logistics Center in Oklahoma City, OK, presented by Norman Bowles. The BLAST participants split into two teams, each of which was given the task of using leadership principles to devise a turnaround plan for the Logistics Center. These plans were presented to the entire group, including Mr. Bowles. Mr. Bowles then led a session on how he engineered the turnaround, including additional leadership lessons, and how to simultaneously carry off multiple initiatives. Some of his main points were:

1. Vision - it's critical for the leader to develop and communicate the vision of where the organization is going.
2. Self awareness - Try to observe your actions from a 3rd party point of view. See yourself as an instrument to accomplish goals. Try to minimize emotions - especially "hot buttons."
3. Stay on the high road - Achieve your objective through others' interest. Understand why - do not get caught up in false paradigms.
4. Perseverance and risk taking are critical.
5. Know the drivers - what motivates others? What do they value?
6. Understand the peculiarity of the culture - just because it worked somewhere else or in theory means it unlikely to work *exactly the same* in your endeavors. Each group or organization has a unique culture that requires unique ideas or adaptations.

Overall, Mr. Bowles made a world class organization out of one that was failing by anyone's standards.

### ***Wrap-up and Luncheon - Bill Proenza (Director, SRH) and David Huff (ITA)***

A final session and luncheon served as the backdrop for presentations by Bill Proenza and David Huff. Bill focused on the importance of leadership for the future of the NWS, hence the launch of the BLAST program. David concentrated on the servant-leader model and importance of leadership in all aspects of our lives.

#### **4. Southern Region Headquarters BLAST library resources.**

An extensive leadership library has been developed and is available for Southern Region employees for leadership training. This library includes leadership books from the most influential leaders in the U.S., leadership videos, audio tapes and several leadership related work books. To view the leadership books available, please go to the Southern Region Headquarters BLAST Web site at: [www.srh.noaa.gov/ftproot/blast/blast.htm](http://www.srh.noaa.gov/ftproot/blast/blast.htm)

#### ***Acknowledgments***

Special thanks go to Gary Grice, Deputy Director, Southern Region Headquarters (SRH), Steven Cooper, Chief, Climate, Water and Weather Division (CWWD), SRH, for reviewing this technical memorandum, for conceiving and implementing the BLAST program, and for their leadership in the NWS. Further thanks go to Dan Smith, Chief, Scientific Services Division (SSD), SRH, and Leslie Carnahan, SSD Editor, for their reviews and editing.

#### ***References***

- Barker, J., 1999: *Joel Barker's Leadership- Five Lessons for Leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, American Media Incorporated, Des Moines, IA, 34 pp.
- Bethune, G., 1998: *From Worst to First*, Wiley and Sons, New York, NY, 294 pp.
- Byham, W.C., 1997: *Zapp the Video- The Lightning of Empowerment*, Development Dimensions International, Inc., Pittsburgh, Pa.
- Fish* video, 1998: Charthouse International Learning Corporation, Burnsville, MN.
- Hunter, J.C., 1998: *The Servant*, Prima Publishing, Boston, MA, 187 pp.
- Kotter, J.P., 1996: *Leading Change*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA 187 pp.
- Oakley, E. and D. Krug, 1991: *Enlightened Leadership*, Fireside Books, New York, NY, 265 pp.