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January 2015

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Todd Holm

Introduction

Over the course of the last 25+ years, I've had the opportunity to work with several forensics programs. In the last 15 years I have been part of the coaching staff on four different forensics programs that have gone from being out of sweepstakes range at the national tournaments to taking sweepstakes trophies home from national tournaments. Three of those four programs had illustrious backgrounds boasting multiple national champions and multiple appearances in the top 10 and top five \at either the American Forensics Association—National Individual Events Tournament (AFA-NIET) or the National Forensics Association's (NFA) national tournament. Over time, programs change. Graduate teaching assistants, coaches, assistant directors and directors of forensics can change. Program funding can change. Sometimes things we can plan for, but other times changes take us by surprise. The one thing that will always change is the students on the team. After four years most coaches find themselves looking at a completely new team. A new wave of team members may significantly influence team culture (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985; Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982; Sackmann, 1990). Jensen and Jensen (2007) pointed out forensics has an "inherent revolving door" (p. 21) and the team culture will change unless care is taken to maintain it. So most successful coaches work hard to maintain the culture of their teams because the culture of a small organization with such high rates of "turnover" is a very fluid and dynamic thing.

When the students on the team change or when the coaching staff changes, the very culture of the team is bound to shift. While the director of a brand new program is faced with the challenge of establishing a team culture, a *new* director of an *established* forensics program that has fallen from its days of glory (or has never tasted glory) faces an even more challenging cultural shift. Rebuilding a team can be even more challenging because the team has an established culture that does not involve the level of commitment, effort, and practice it takes to be successful at the national level. The truth is, it is easier to *not* be nationally successful in forensics than to *be* successful on a national level. So the new director of forensics is asking a team who may have become complacent with current level of success to set higher goals, to agree to higher standards, to work harder, to be more committed, and to make more sacrifices to have more success. Asking a team to do this is like asking a river rafting team to raft upstream. Both groups seem to be engaged in roughly the same activity, it's just a whole lot harder. The trick is to convince them that the extra effort is worth the potential reward. It is more difficult to rebuild a team than it is to build a team because, as the title of Ted Duboise's 2013 book explains, *It's Easier To Give Birth Than Resurrect The Dead*.

The purpose of this article is to provide a director of forensics who wishes to rebuild a forensics program with advice, ideas, and guidance based on organizational theory, organizational change research, and lived experience. This article approaches organizational culture as a dynamic construct of an organization. "Proponents of the perspective of culture as a dynamic construct are interested in both a better understanding of organizations through application of a cultural perspective and a conscious development of organizational culture" (Sackmann, 1990, p. 133). This perspective treats culture as something an organization *is* and something an organization *has*. The shaping of forensics program's culture is critical to the program's success. White (2010) reminds us "There is not one 'right' type of organizational culture to which all teams should adhere" (p. 158). The information provided here is designed to help a director rebuild a team by rebuilding a team culture. This approach does not prescribe the culture to be built but does, from time to time, refer to specific examples of qualities a director *may* try to instill in the team These are not the qualities you *must* or even *should* instill, but rather they serve as examples of how to create change.

Anyone who has been involved in competitive forensics activities knows building or rebuilding a forensics team is a daunting task. A competitively successful forensics team is a collection of exceptional people. As a director of forensics, the task of finding and cultivating the talent required for a competitively successful program is not something to be taken lightly. This article addresses the pragmatics and philosophy of building or rebuilding a forensics program.

Defining your program

Starting a new program is to start tabula rasa, a blank slate. Rebuilding a team brings with it a good deal of cultural baggage. But in either case, the Director needs to have a solid vision of what the team will be when the building/rebuilding process is complete. Here are five basic considerations to contemplate as you begin to define your *new* team and *new* program (whether you are starting from scratch or rebuilding).

Defining Success

Not every coach, program, or institution is looking for national success. Some coaches are looking to provide a little forensics to a lot of students and see a year where many team members rotated through as successful. Other coaches measure their team's success strictly in terms of national sweepstakes placing. For some of those coaches only an AFA-NIET or NFA sweepstakes trophy counts. Southwest Baptist University, under the direction of the late Bob Derryberry, ran an highly successful program but rarely if ever attended AFA or NFA nationals. For debate programs it might be the National Debate Topic (AFA-NDT) Tournament, Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA), or the National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA) national tournament that marks success. Because SBU was a full-service program (offering opportunities in a variety of forms of debate and individual events), the Pi Kappa Delta national tournaments held meaning. For other schools, the Phi Rho Pi national tournament or the National

Christian College Forensics Association or some other tournament defines success. Some programs shoot for success at the state level. Others might only travel to a handful of tournaments all year and consider their placings at those tournaments to be their measure of success.

For most directors rebuilding a program, you will get to decide how you (and subsequently your team) define success. Occasionally some member of administration at an institution may want a role in deciding how the program defines success but usually the director of forensics sets the standards. But if you fail to decide what success is or what would make your team successful, you can never really know if and when you are successful. As you identify what constitutes a successful year for your team, don't fall into the false dichotomy of a "competitive" team versus an "educational" team. These are terms we have heard bantered around for years. The labels give a false representation of what the goals of the respective teams might be and sets up a false dichotomy of how you might frame your team.

To say you don't run a competitive team, but run an educational team is to say you reject competitive accomplishments as a means by which you will evaluate your team's success. You focus on your team's growth and development as speakers and debaters. While the standard has face validity, the fact is the only way you can tell if you have been successful at educating students is through some form of assessment tool. The most obvious assessment tool for a forensics team is intercollegiate competition. We invite outside judges to evaluate our students and compare them to other students. This approach is an imperfect system because it doesn't compare our student's performances to their previous performances but rather to the performances of others. So if you want to run a truly educational program, competition isn't really necessary. You can coach a student in your office, assess the student and coach some more, followed by additional assessment to determine growth. But getting students to sign on for that kind of long-term learning activity is difficult. Competition is intrinsically linked to the activity because, for the vast majority of our students, the competitive nature of the activity drives them.

But not all programs are created equal. Some programs have more than a dozen coaches and six-figure budgets, while others rely on a single coach (or the program may be student run) and are funded through bake sales and personal contributions of team members and coaches. It is unrealistic, despite America's penchant for underdog stories, for both of these programs to have the same goals. State organizations have long struggled with ways to level the playing field at the state championships. Some states will limit the number of entries any given school can bring thus preventing larger programs from overpowering the tournament. Some state and national tournaments will recognize different divisions of schools based on entry size. But ultimately large teams with large coaching staffs and scholarships for team members seem to win anyway. But really, that is fair. It would be unfair to structurally constrain teams with greater resources (more travel opportunities, more coaches, etc.) who were able to attract students who had successful high school careers with scholarships from not winning a state tournament.

Unless you happen to be one of the few programs in the country that has an administrator who is actively involved in rebuilding a program and has the background, knowledge and desire to help set standards for success for the program, as the director, you decide what success means for your program. You are free to decide if only placing in the top 10 (or top five) at AFA-NIET or NFA means your team had a successful year. But you can also pick one of the other national tournaments or have no national goal at all. You might decide your team will focus on providing the forensics experience to a certain number of students annually and traveling to a certain number of tournaments each semester. That is your decision to make and should be made *before* students come through the door.

Recruiting Students

Once you know your view of team success, you are ready to put the wheels of change in motion. "Anyone interested in starting a forensic program naturally needs to be concerned with recruitment of students to be on the team" (Schnoor & Kozinski, 2005, p. 3). Over the years I came to realize I wanted my teams to be nationally ranked. Having a nationally ranked team required a special kind of student. I realized many students who were tremendously successful in high school, were successful because they were naturally talented, but when they came to college they were disillusioned because many couldn't win with just talent. They needed to marry that talent with learned skills. They needed to learn self-control and self-discipline. They couldn't just win by being a ball of energy (and they didn't like that). After all, many had a brilliant high school career without working that hard; why should college be any different? So I started setting up tables at state high school tournaments and giving away everything from temporary tattoos to t-shirts to thousands of dollars in scholarships to recruit students who were not quantifiably more successful than someone without high school experience. Miami University alone had three national pentathlon champions who did not compete in high school. I can rattle off a long list of national champions with no high school experience. The point is you need to find the *right* students for your program.

After many years of recruiting ups and downs, I came to realize I wasn't looking for the student who would do forensics despite that fact it was hard, I was looking for the student who would do forensics *because* it was hard. As I read about the Millennial Generation (Barnes, 2009; Espinoza, Ukleja, & Rusch, 2010; Holm, 2012; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009) I began to realize finding the right kind of student meant creating the perception our team was highly selective. High achievers want to feel they are special and they were selected over others. My first year at Miami we recruited hard, virtually begging people to be a part of the team. As a result people drifted in and out of the program and the second year we had no sophomores. Sujansky and Ferri-Reed (2009) tell us the first step in recruiting this generation is "to make sure you let them know they are keepers" (p. 82). So the second year we tried a new approach; slick brochures and a tryout process. Anyone could tryout, only a few would be selected. We gave the impression we were a "we mean business" team and we attracted students who wanted that kind

of experience. We retained more than 75% of the students who "made the team." The truth, of course, was only one or two real students had not made the team (a real flaky freshman who listed no less than a dozen other organizations she really wanted to be active in and a "goth girl" who's dry read of a one-minute poetry piece would have been fantastic if we had asked her to read with no emotion and try to prove to us she wasn't trying at all). The perception of those who tried out and "made the team" was that only a select group of students were chosen. They may have gotten the idea because we had a signup sheet for tryouts with dozens of names on it. A close reading of the list would have shown many of the names were names of famous communication scholars, former national champions, and even some superhero alter ego names written in a common handwriting.

By the third year we had added a team "speed-dating" interview to the tryout process and it had actually become fairly selective. Whereas my first year, we were begging anyone and everyone to join, by the third year we felt our resources could support adding 10 members to the team and we had more than 40 people tryout. We had to eliminate half of the students in tryouts with the coaches and then half of the callbacks in a two-tiered speed-dating interview and group activity exercise. The results were fantastic. We didn't lose a single student from the incoming class of 10 to attrition, and they worked hard.

In addition to the tryouts for all the new people, all returning members had to reapply to be on the team. They completed three-page long application that asked the students to reflect on the previous year, identify obstacles (both past and future), establish goals, and explain in what way, other than competitive success, they contributed to the team. For the most part, the reapplication was a formality but we did trim some students from the team over the years and a couple of students got part way through the application and realized forensics wasn't going to work for them anymore. Each of them came in and talked to me about it, explained there were no hard feelings and they were just at a place where they couldn't be the kind of team member they wanted to be and that the team needed and deserved. We parted on good terms and the students would even come back and help with tournaments and fall recruiting. The reapplication process allowed them to treat leaving the team professionally, which is a valuable experience in and of itself. The other members of the team seemed to understand and support their decisions. Sujansky and Ferri-Reed (2009) reminded us team members can become "sullen and resentful that poor performance is being tolerated, and overall performance can suffer" (p. 85) if team members loiter on the fringes rather than resigning from the team.

As you begin recruiting for your team, develop a system for recruiting that matches your team goals. You might want to cast a wide net and help as many into the activity as possible. You might want a team no bigger than what you can comfortably fit in one van. If the team is going to be small, it is critical they have personalities that mesh with yours. If you have 30-40 students on the team, you can have someone on the team who is your polar opposite and annoying and you can simply busy yourself with other things and other people. But if you have a team of five that luxury disappears.

As part of the recruiting process (before they sign on for good) you should explain to them what your goals for the team are and what is expected of them. If you don't plan to take a team to the national tournament and you have a student who was tremendously successful in high school and excited to join a college team, you might want to make sure the student understands that, while there are college national tournaments, your team does not attend them. Similarly, if you are trying to place in top 10 at nationals with 10 students, they must realize they will likely need to compete in five or six events each at nationals and will be pushed very hard to be successful. Either way, it is only fair they understand the expectations when they join.

One of the first things you need to decide is how you will bring students onto the team and what it takes to be a member of the team. Will the team be open to anyone who wishes to participate or will it be a select group who have tried out for, and been selected for, the team? I have worked with both models and seen those teams achieve national success. The choice is yours, but as the leader for the team I strongly encourage you to approach recruiting with a plan and a goal. Catch-as-catch-can is not a good leadership philosophy.

Focus of the Program

Forensics refers to competitive speech and debate activities. Within the activity, "forensics" is typically thought of as the Individual Events (public speaking, oral interpretation, and limited preparation events). But you need to decide what the focus of your program will be. Will the program be a debate program, an IE program, a joint IE & debate program? If you do IEs will you align with AFA-NIET, NFA, or some other national parent organization? If you do debate will your team do Parliamentary Debate, Public Forum, National Debate Topic (NDT), Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA), Lincoln-Douglas (LD) or another form altogether? Most of those answers will be based on your background, your resources, and your geographic location.

But for many forensics is about more than just competition. For many programs a service component is an important part of the team culture. Students on the team will serve as volunteers in communication centers of hold showcases or public debates every semester. I had students who would set aside several nights, as a team, to work the phones during the school's phone-a-thon. Some students volunteer to give campus tours (and happened to wear their team shirts when they do it). If these things are important to you, then you need to "budget" resources for them. More than money, this kind of activity is about budgeting human resources and energy. Nights spent working the phones or giving public presentations are nights not spent practicing or rewriting. But they are also nights not spent studying, writing papers, or working on group projects. Everything you add to a schedule comes with a price.

My advice is service projects are well worth the resources you invest in them. The manning of phones and giving tours led to the Admissions Office paying for pad-folios and some other items for our summer speech institute (a $3,000 windfall). Hosting two public debate forums and a forensic showcase every semester

made us a critical part of our department because basic course students were required to attend for their classes. At the Speech Communication Association convention (the forerunner to the National Communication Association) in New Orleans in 1988, Dr. Vicky Bradford explained that too often forensics directors forget to play to their internal publics. She says bluntly, "We cannot exist in isolation" (Bradford, 1988, p. 3). In her paper she points out too often forensics programs are the best kept secret on campus, the hidden crown jewel of scholastic success. By incorporating service elements we connect with our internal public, make ourselves invaluable to our departments, and provide our students with the opportunity to use their communication skills in new and diverse settings which invariably makes them better competitive speakers as well.

Resources

When we talk about resources we immediately think about our budgets. Budgets are important, but I will refer you to Larry Schnoor's article on budgets for more information. Other equally important resources must be considered as well. You need to consider the student population, your staff, time, energy, and administrative support. As the director and team leader, you will be responsible for generating more of each of these until the program has enough of each to achieve your goals.

I have not worked with a program larger than about 20-25 students. While that is a good sized team, it is far from a large team. But because the teams had national success goals at AFA-NIET or NFA the students needed to be dedicated and very good at what they did. Finding talented students will always be a challenge and we have talked about recruiting to some extent already, however, there are two types of recruiting: active recruiting and passive recruiting. Active recruiting is shaking hands and talking directly with students who are on your campus or who plan to attend your college. Passive recruiting is all about visibility.

If a high school student sits down at a computer and types in "college forensics" or "college debate" or "college speech team" and the name of your state, will your team web page pop up in the first five hits? If not, you are a secret that is too well kept. Once the student goes to the web site will they find out who is on the team, what the team does, and what the team values? Or will they find a page set up five or more years ago by the departmental secretary that tells students to contact the director for more information (and the contact information may or may not lead to you)? But really the web site is for parents because Millennials go for more active social media sites to learn about the team. Finding good students is hard enough; you have to make it easy for the good students who are looking for you to find you. The same is true of holding events on campus. We sometimes forget almost every campus requires a basic communication course and those courses provide an opportunity to make sure every student on campus has seen our team perform at least once. Holding public debates and forensic showcases that are part of the requirements for the basic course ensures every student body president, every student body treasurer, and every student on the student finance

committee has seen our students before we ask them for money. Passive recruit-ment of resources is critical. Providing this kind of public venue for student per-formance is helpful to the entire campus. Foote and Holm (2011) wrote an article detailing the logistics of putting on a service learning project. Consult their work for more details.

As you look at your resources you must consider your human resources as well. This idea may come as a shock to some younger coaches, but there are limits to what you can do by yourself. Each day only has 24 hours and each week is limited to seven days. Students need coaching and they need a coach's attention. A good coach can successfully "manage" five to 10 students (depending on course load, family commitments, and the level of experience the students have). If you are planning to have more than 10 students, you will probably need additional coaches. A coaching staff can be something you build along the way. Having an additional coach doesn't mean you must have a full-time, tenure-track, assistant director of forensics. Additional coaches can be another faculty member who is willing to help out, an alumnus of the program, or even a friend with the right experience. But remember, they need to get something for their involvement as well. Even people who are intrinsically motivated to coach need affirmation and recognition. Again, you must budget for a way to affirm them.

As the DOF you also need to make sure you clearly convey your vision of what the team will be to your coaches. "Working as a forensic educator can be difficult enough in ideal situations, but it can be a hellish experience if the various coaches/educators in the particular program have differing philosophies regarding their program or if basic managerial and interpersonal communication principles are not followed" (Dreibelbis, 1989, p. 63). Organizational change creates tension and fear, information reduces tension and fear.

Forensics coaches tend to be dedicated, self-less givers who are willing to work 60-80 hours a week and then get in a van and travel all weekend. But eve-rything comes with a price. You, as a human being, need time to not work (and not feel guilty about it). For many years I was a "travel every weekend" kind of coach in hot pursuit for qualifying legs for the AFA-NIET. More recently I real-ized by traveling every weekend I never had a chance to recover or recharge and consequently my students were not getting my best coaching. More important to the success of my students, they didn't have a chance to rewrite and rework pieces themselves, let alone give adequate time to school work, a social life beyond the team, and their own families. So I started a new travel schedule policy to better manage our human *energy* resources. We developed a travel schedule that limited our travel to two weekends a month (usually) and never more than three weekends in a row. One of the other weekends was reserved for an eight hour in-house work day with a review of ballots and goal setting in the morning, a progress report during the team-provided lunch, and an end-of-day evaluation and additional goal setting for things to be accomplished before the next sign-up for a tournament. The other weekend was completely free to students. They could go home, take a road trip, party with friends or just sleep away a weekend.

I will admit there was a nagging worry in my mind that if I gave them time off they would like the time off and decide to quit. But the reality was quite the opposite. They enjoyed the time off but really wanted to get back into the game and hit it hard on the Monday after the weekend off. I was surprised when I came in on the off-weekend and I found many of them were in the squad room or would stop by for a while and they would talk to each other and laugh and socialize and work on homework and sometimes even work on their events. They didn't come in because they had to, but because they were friends, loved their team, loved the activity, and were at home in the squad room. Never underestimate the value of the squad room in developing your team (Carmack & Holm, 2005) or your team culture.

Finally, it is important you develop administrative support. Bradford (1988) talks about how she would send a memo, after every tournament, to the department chair and dean telling them how the team had done in competition. A lot of things have changed since 1988. Because of technology, our deans and department chairs and other administrators are inundated with emails that are all very "important" to someone. So an email every Monday might get pushed to that part of the priority list that is unread. But a monthly update provides a bulleted list and status update and can be scanned in less than 30 seconds will likely get checked. Rather than listing all of the awards your successful team won (down to third place in novice prose at a tiny tournament), hit the highlights.

Writing the monthly email is simple. Start by telling them you just want to keep them in the loop on the team's success. Then tell them some summary information like "at this point, nine members (or a percentage if the number is more impressive) of our team have qualified for the national tournament and will be taking X many events to the tournament" or "Our Parliamentary debate program is currently ranked X by the NPDA" (the information is available on a website). Then mention six or seven impressive schools you competed against (impressive sports schools are big names) then tell them about sweepstakes placing and hit the specifics for your top 10 or 15 successes by individual students. End with a quick thank you for their support. If the administrator has to scroll down, the email it is probably too long.

Team Culture

Up to this point we have talked about issues that lay the groundwork for developing a team culture. You can't really shape the culture you want until you have defined what you want the team to be and until you have some students to fill the ranks of the team. But before you can launch your team You will need to spend some time thinking about what you want the real core values of the team to be and write those down. I encourage you to post them on the team website and in your team's squad room. Be sure you have a good grasp of what you want the team to be and look like before you start taking steps to change the culture. Making the team culture up as you go will be far more laborious and stressful than having a vision of what the new culture should be like.

Cultural Change

Before we get into the nuts and bolts of changing a team culture, it is important you realize the impact of change. Organizational change often comes with collateral damage (Collins, 1998; Margulies & Wallace, 1973; Michela & Vena, 2012; Salem, 1999). It makes people upset and upset people can be disruptive to progress. So once you are ready to create a culture change in your team, I strongly recommend you talk with your department chair and get word to your dean you are going to change things. If you are going to ask students to be more competitively successful and work harder, some will initially resist. As part of the resistance they will do what they have been taught by their parents to do when they have a problem with a teacher; they will go to your department chair or dean. In fairness you are the problem and you must be dealt with by someone who can make you do it their way.

Preemptively discussing the change you are planning with administration keeps them from getting blindsided by angry students (or their parents) and provides administrators with your side of the issue with your goals and reasoning. My experience with administrators has taught me many things, two of the most valuable are: (1) administrators don't like surprises and (2) administrators like rigor and competitive success. Those words are meaningful to administrators. At one institution, I had to cut the NDT program. Had I not talked with my department chair and warned him about the likely backlash and angry letters and phone calls (to him and everyone up the chain to the president), the blowback may have been far more severe. He told the dean, provost, and president about the plan and briefly explained why the change was being made. The chair, dean, provost, and president were kind enough to blind copy me on all of their responses to the angry emails they received. Without exception they supported my decision in their responses and briefly explained why it had been necessary to eliminate that part of our program showing that it was not some rouge DOF decision, but rather something administrators were already aware of, understood, and supported.

Also be aware change causes fracturing of the team and alliances to form. When I started at one program, the standards for travel were fairly relaxed. I set new standards that were reasonably rigorous. To travel you needed to have three prepared events that were competition ready according to a coach (or two prepared and two limited-preparation events). The revolt that followed would have made you think I asked them all to join the military and sign over their first born. They explained to me, adamantly, how that was unrealistic at best and more than likely simply impossible. They insisted requiring that much from them was requiring the impossible. I assured them they could do it and ended the discussion in our meeting with that thought and moved on to other logistical issues because I didn't want to dwell on the negative talk.

The next day two students came to my office and said they really liked what I had said and they were willing to do whatever it took to become nationally successful (and two years later they were). But the others clearly regrouped, devised a plan of attack and launched "operation denial." Two days after our team meeting, eight students signed up for successive half-hour appointments. Each told me

they really wanted to be on the team but reluctantly confessed there was just no way they could meet the outrageous requirements. I told each in turn that I understood and if their situation changed they would always have a spot on the team.

My sixth or seventh appointment was with the only returning member of the team who had been in out-rounds the at nationals the year before (a quarter-final). The appointment started out the same way. Eventually she said, "I really want to be on the team this year but there is just no way I can have three events ready this semester." I stopped her and said, "No you misunderstood." A small smirk came over her face because she knew she had finally broken me and these ridiculous standards would be lifted. But that was not the case. I corrected her saying, "You don't have to have three events in the first semester, you have to have three events to put a foot in the van. But I understand you have more than you can handle this semester and if that changes next semester there will always be a spot for you. But if you have a script book or page slicks we would appreciate you returning them because we are running a bit short." Her look changed from a smirk to confusion as I stood up and extended my hand to shake hers adding "just bring those in as soon as you can, you can just leave them on my desk if I'm not here" as I ushered her out the door.

A total of three students survived the mass exodus. About 10 showed solidarity in leaving the team. The result was three years later we were in the top five at the NFA national tournament with the third largest number of breaks to quarter finals. The moral of the story: when you promote change that is harder than the status quo you can expect resistance and you can expect to lose students. Experience tells me that you should realistically *expect* to lose between one-half and three-quarters of your team. Obviously this loss is less painful if you are new to the team and don't have personal relationships with the team members. But if the students don't want to be a part of the program you want to direct, they are filling a seat a student who is willing to do it your way could have. Having a student you like leave the team is hard, but in two or three years they were going to graduate and leave you anyway.

Strong Culture

Organizational culture scholars Terrence Deal and Allan Kennedy suggest organizations are better if they have a *strong* culture. To establish and transmit a strong culture they suggest the culture should have readily identifiable values, heroes, and rites and rituals (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Making these vehicles of culture communication ubiquitous helps students understand what the team is supposed to be without you saying "this is what you should be." Organizational Communication "research has often considered symbols as objects that represent organizations" (Islam & Zyphur, 2009, p. 114-115) Therefore it is important you careful sculpt the heroes and symbols of your organization (Higgins & McAllaster, 2004; Islam & Zyphur, 2009, Trice & Beyer, 1984).

Showing Values

Corporations will spend a great deal of time and energy and even hire consultants to write mission and vision statements. They consider mission and vision statements important because they encapsulate what the organization wants to be. A company like 3M pushes the idea of innovation hard whereas another company, like a brewery, might push the steadfast tradition of doing things the way they have always done them. Each company communicates, promotes and, rewards those values. As a DOF you should do the same thing with your team values. Make sure your team knows what the team values and what your objective or mission is each year. Don't just assume they will pick it up along the way.

Heroes

The idea of an organizational hero is important to the team. The *heroes* in your organizational mythology should be people who reflect the values of your team. The heroes don't necessarily have to be the most successful people on the team, just the ones who reflect the values you are trying to instill. One of the ideas I try to convey to my teams at the national tournament is that every round is important. Even if you think you have no chance of making out-rounds going into the fourth round of your last event at NFA nationals that round is important to the team. Because telling stories is one of the best ways to transmit organizational culture (Wines & Hamilton; 2009) I tell a story about one of my personal heroes. The hero is a student who was on one of my teams who walked into his last round of impromptu at nationals knowing he would not make out-rounds and saw three competitors who had been in semi-finals and/or finals at the AFA-NIET just two weeks earlier. He had every reason to simply throw in the towel. But instead he took a chance and lived large in the round jumping up on a table to make a point. One of the judges was entertained enough by that to write on the ballot he was bumping the student up a rank for bringing that much energy. That gave the student a rank of three instead of four and that gave the team an extra half a sweepstakes point which meant the difference between our team losing a tie-breaker and going home with no sweepstakes award and placing 10th and walking out with a big silver cup. He was a hero, not because he won the tournament, but because he didn't quit.

Find your own heroes. If you are new to the team be careful about using stories from previous teams because they represent outsiders. If you use stories about organizational outsiders make sure you keep the focus on the act not the person. Eventually your students will provide you with enough stories to transmit the team culture and they will tell their own stories. When you hear them telling stories to new members, make sure they are stories that convey the values you want associated with your team. Students relish in telling stories about how they threw something together the night before a tournament and still made finals. It doesn't even matter if those stories are from their high-school competition days. While those stories are fun and even funny, the message they convey is it is okay, and perhaps even preferable, to throw something together at the last minute. That is not something I wanted team members to do. Instead I promoted the idea we would always

be prepared for competition or we would not compete. When I met with the in-coming students, one of the promises I made in the first meeting was I would never let them walk into a round unprepared and look foolish. So having stories that championed last-minute, haphazard performances (regardless of success) is something I tried to wean from the team's collective memory. You will be sur-prised at how quickly the team's stories change and how that impacts the team culture.

Rites and Rituals

Every group I have ever been involved with, whether in forensics or out, has had its own unique set of rites and rituals. Sports teams have pregame rituals, forensics teams have team warm-ups, the military has deeply rooted promotion traditions, and businesses have their versions of all of the above. Many of these develop organically. Students start traditions on their own. We find a standard set of warm-ups; team leaders assume certain roles and responsibilities. If you are truly interested in developing a strong team culture, monitor the team's rituals and shape (or reshape) these behaviors and in some cases even create these vehicles of culture (Faules & Drecksel, 1991; Peters & Waterman, 1982).

Many teams have some kind of visual representation of their progress toward nationals: a qualification board, for example. Those are great ideas because they show what the team values (national competition) and shows the team's progres-sion toward those values. But I valued the process of preparation and a "Quall Wall" only shows how our end products are performing. I wanted students to un-derstand a process of development and revision moved you toward a performance ready for competition. So I developed a "Star Chart."

The idea of the star chart started almost as a joke. As my team was preparing for the first tournament, I was finding it difficult to keep track of how event de-velopment was progressing. While I was standing in a checkout line at the office supply store I saw a two-pack of stick-on stars for a dollar. These are the kind kindergarten teachers put on your coloring pages. I had an excel sheet with all of the students names and events hung on my office door. To get a feel for where we were I would put a star in the box of each of their events. So if you were just getting an event started it got a green star. If you had an outline with research, it moved to a red star, then blue when you had a few rough drafts, silver when it was ready to be memorized and finally gold when it was ready for competition. The star chart really helped me gauge our readiness at a glance. What surprised me was how students reacted to the star chart. One night as students were getting ready to leave the squad room they stopped by my office and asked if I had gotten their revisions and we chatted briefly about their progress. I said goodnight and wished them well but they continued to loiter outside my door. I asked if they needed something else. They looked sheepishly at each other before one of them finally said "Well, we were kind of wondering if you were going to update the chart tonight, you know, before we left." Here was a group of students 18-22 years old, standing outside my office at 11:00 pm waiting for little stickers like kids in a pre-K program.

Obviously they weren't standing there for the sticker itself. The issue was one of recognition. They had worked hard and the sticker was a public acknowledgment of their work (Nelson, 1994). The sticker was a symbol that said they were "good" that day. More important to the team culture, the sticker rewarded one of the things I valued, the preparation process. The stars were important to them because they now saw event preparation as a process. Eventually the star chart's importance became more codified on my teams. A handout told you everything you needed to do to reach the next level. Updating the star chart became a part of our team meetings leading up to the first tournament and new stars received public applause. While we didn't boo people who didn't advance their events, students later told me they felt guilty if they only had one event that moved from a green to a red that week. The ritual reinforced our values, celebrated our progress, and brought us together as a team. The ritual made us a stronger team (and ultimately more successful).

Obviously, each DOF should establish his/her own rites and rituals. As you do so make sure you are celebrating what is important to you. I have set aside team meeting time to discuss what students learned at the tournament the weekend before. Everyone was expected to bring something they had learned. Initially we had some inappropriate things pop up like "I learned this person was a jerk." But with a little redirection, we started a culture that reinforced the idea we should be looking for learning opportunities at every tournament. In our post nationals debriefing, we went through all of our ballots and spent some time talking about trends we saw in judging criteria by event. Then we spent some time talking about trends we saw in performance by genre. We recorded all of these observations and talked about them in our preseason work week the next year. The ritual, again, promoted the idea we are ever-learning because the activity is ever-changing.

Leadership

The pop culture market is flooded with books on leadership, countless workshops, seminars, and webinars offer leadership training, and the communication discipline offers classes and courses in leadership. Private businesses, the federal government, and the military spend incalculable amounts of money on leadership training. The reason for the abundance of information available on leadership is twofold: leadership is critical to an organization's success and no one right way to lead has been found (Hollander, 1971). For example, the decisive, authoritarian leader who saves the day after a natural disaster is not the leader you put in charge of a smooth running group. Those are different skill sets. Even when looking at business leaders, we see significant difference between what a midlevel manager for an advertising agency and a midlevel manager for a fast-food conglomerate finds successful as a leadership style. But leaders exhibit some commonalities during a period of change.

Lead by Example

If you are asking students to work harder and do more than they have done before they need someone to model the behavior for them. You must remember,

while you have a new vision for the team, they haven't seen the vision. Even after you tell them what it looks like, explain what they need to do, and what it will lead to, they go back into a world that is largely unchanged. Forensics is the same activity in the same world but somehow you say it will be different. You need to model the change for them.

Set the Course, Stay the Course

Despite the fact students want to think they control their own destiny, the truth is they are reassured by strong leadership. If you know what you want the team to accomplish and lay out a path that will get them there, they will follow you if they see you out front leading the way. But you must act with confidence. If you question yourself, why shouldn't they? A lack of decisive leadership causes them to wonder, "If this isn't the course we are sure we should be on, maybe we should all stop and, as a group, decide what direction we should be heading." When that happens a bunch of teenagers are running your team. The running of the team is one of the things the college hired you to do. There will be opportunities for participatory leadership roles for students once they have been bought into the new team culture.

Sticking to a more rigorous set of standards is not easy. Even when you know what you are doing is the right thing to do it can be a constant battle. Students will try to erode your resolve and you will likely spend many long hours alone as they sulk waiting for you to change your mind. But you have to stick to your standards. If you say you will be in your office until 7:00 pm on Saturday to work with them, don't leave at 6:45.

You can watch many sports movies to see the importance of leadership to a competitive team (*Hoosiers*, *Miracle*, even *The Mighty Ducks*). But there is a scene from the movie *U-571* starring Matthew McConaughey, Bill Paxton, and Harvey Keitel that sums up the need for confident leadership. The movie is about a mission to capture a cipher machine from a Nazi submarine adrift at sea. To do this, Americans approach the vessel disguised as a Germany rescue crew. But things go wrong and the American vessel is destroyed and her captain is lost putting an unsure Lieutenant Tyler (McConaughey) in command. After some significant tensions between the Lieutenant and his surviving crew that did not end well, old seadog Chief Petty Officer Henry Klough (Keitel) offers his advice to Tyler saying:

> This is the Navy, where a commanding officer is a mighty and terrible thing. A man to be feared and respected, all knowing, all powerful. Don't you dare say what you said to the boys back there again. "I don't know." Those three words will kill a crew, dead as a depth charge. You're the skipper now, and the skipper always knows what to do, whether he does or not.

Being a DOF is also a terrible and mighty thing. Being a leader is about having a group look to you for guidance with the faith you will always know what to do. That faith has to be balanced against being a dictator and know-it-all

(who doesn't). Having a plan, setting the course, and *staying the course* is good leadership. Of course, it helps if your plan is sound, the course takes you to where you need to be, and you have the wisdom to see when it is time to change course.

The idea of leadership is evidenced, not just in grand moments, but in the little day-to-day issues. Good leaders ensure the vans are always reserved, the hotel rooms are confirmed, and the tournament entry was submitted on time and accurately. The good leader always has a copy of the tournament schedule, knows where registration is, and knows where extemp draw is being held. Good leaders don't hoard information; they disseminate it to empower their students. Because while the good leader knows where extemp prep is, the good team doesn't need to ask.

The bottom line is your team's attitude and behavior is reflective of your leadership. If you are a hot mess, they will be a hot mess. If you are constantly negative, they too will be negative. If you blame judges, they will blame judges. If you take a haphazard and nonchalant approach to forensics (missing coaching appointments, not returning drafts of scripts in a timely fashion, approving substandard materials for competition, being generally unaware of the goings on of the squad) your students will approach forensics in the same manner (skipping coaching sessions, not revising scripts in a timely fashion, taking substandard material to tournaments, etc.). If you are professional and focused, they will eventually become professional and focused. If you work hard and prioritize forensics they will as well. Cultural changes like the ones just described won't happen the first week, or the first month, they might not even happen in the first year. But the changes will happen.

Dedication

If one of the things you want from them is greater dedication you must show you are more dedicated than previous coaches were or than you were in the past. One of the rules of military leadership is that leaders are the first ones in and the last ones out. The Millennial Generation of students struggles to accept a *do as I say not as I do* approach (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). If you are there when they arrive and there when they leave, you are demonstrating the dedication you want to see. Being a leader by your actions can become overwhelming when they out number you ten-to-one. Two coaches can work in shifts making sure one coach is before the students and another is present when the last student leaves. Obviously, students keep crazy hours and it is unrealistic to stay in your office or team room until 2:00 am, although we all know coaches who do it. I have done it. I have spent the entire night in my office. But I did it at a point when the team was already demonstrating a level of dedication that was commensurate with me spending the night in my office out of respect for the work they had done. But potentially self-destructive behavioral patterns like these can be solved by a "closing time" for your office or for the team room. Let them know how late you will stay and then be in your office until the designated time. Being a leader means

being the change you want to see. Make sure they see you being dedicated. They see more than you think.

Remember, much of leadership is a matter of perception. If you finish reviewing a script 30 minutes before "closing time," you can spend the rest of your time in the office preparing for tomorrow's lecture or just surfing the internet. Then when it is time to leave, you send the student an email with your edits on their script and a note saying "I wanted to get this to you before I went home today." I once had a student email me a script at four in the morning on a Saturday. I happened to be up getting a drink and saw the email was from a student who had been resisting the cultural change. So I sat down and went through the script and sent it back to him by 4:45 (and went in a little late the next day). It took less than 12 hours for the entire team to hear about it. One student popped her head in my door, gave me a funny look and said "Do you ever sleep?" I said "Yes, in June, July, and August." As a coach you are greatly outnumbered. So make sure the word of your dedication leaks without bragging or complaining about how much you work. Students talk to each other a lot. Give them something to talk about every once in a while.

Priorities

Students have lots of things going on in their lives and lots of pressure from friends and family to devote their time and energy to everything from their classes to partying. Successful coaches get students to prioritize forensics over other activities. I have always asked students to make forensics one of their top four priorities. I fully understand and support the idea that classes must come first. Education is the reason they are in college. That's why parents spend thousands of dollars to send them to college. Some students have jobs or family matters that take priority over forensics. That is fair and understandable. But after those things we are getting into discretionary time for most students. Discretionary time is time they are not studying or working at a job or taking care of their families. It is time spent socializing, drinking, watching TV, playing video games, exercising, going to movies, shopping, or just napping. Discretionary time is also a block of time could be spent working on their events. Those are the things with time commitment elasticity. They can spend an hour (or six) playing video games. Success, in college and in forensics, depends on what they prioritize above game play.

Dedication doesn't mean every minute they are not working on studies or at work they should be working on forensics, but it does mean, in the same way they see the need to finish their history paper before they go out with friends the night before it is due, they should see the need to redraft their informative speech before they party. But that means you need to model that behavior as well. Too often coaches will be martyrs. They will put forensics first and then add their own work to the pile when forensics is done. Making those decisions is a choice, but make it clear to students that is what you do. But again, don't do it by complaining or bragging. I often kept a to-do list next to my desk so students could see what I had on my plate and they could see I crossed off forensic-issues first. In a spirit of full

disclosure sometimes forensic items were held over from one list to the next just so they could be visible as being done first.

As young coaches try to find their level and set boundaries between personal and professional lives, they sometimes express their need for bounrdies and limits poorly. Not too long ago a student told me his young coach told the team in a meeting, "I am going home at 6:00 pm from now on, I don't get paid enough to be here all night." It is good to set the boundaries and establish a closing time but to say "I don't get paid enough to be here all night" sends an unintended message that forensics isn't worth what I am putting into it. Frankly, if you are in forensics because forensics is your job you aren't making enough money. But your students aren't either. Even if they are on a full-ride scholarship, if you calculated the number of hours they put in coaching, traveling, competing, peer coaching, recruiting, researching, writing, and rewriting they probably aren't making minimum wage either.

Competitiveness

Competitiveness is often treated like it is a bad thing. Even former coaches have written about the evils of competitiveness in forensics (Burnett, Brand, & Meister, 2001). But to quote one of the influential people in my forensics education, Dr. Fred Sternhagen from Concordia College in Moorhead MN, "I will not apologize for being competitive." Nor should you. The fact is forensics is an inherently competitive activity and there is absolutely nothing wrong with being competitive. We are as much a competitive activity as football, basketball, or track. We even have a longer competitive season than those three activities. Competition makes us stronger. Competition pushes our students to dig deeper and learn more. We rise to (or drop to) the level of the people around us. Competition is a throwback to a world before soccer games where everyone got a trophy for showing up. Competition teaches us you can do everything right and nothing wrong and still not be one of the six best. Competing will help them deal with the realities of a working world. They learn how to deal with failure. Because while we still have a big trophy and lots of respect for the second place winner at nationals, the person who comes in second in a job search goes home empty handed.

Our culture is based on competition. Most accomplishments are based on some form of competition. We were the first to put a man on the moon because of the *space race*. Capitalism is based on a *free-market competition*. Our very *evolution* was based on competing traits. So it is surprising so many people now take a dim view of competition. If you are someone who does not want to run a "competitive" team, I would encourage you to ask yourself why. If you reject competitiveness because you think giving more students a little exposure to forensics is better than giving a few students a lot of exposure and that is the way you are shaping your team, okay. More power to you, I support you. So will the forensics community. But if you don't want to place an emphasis on competition because you don't think you can win, I think you need to redefine winning. For years a plaque hung outside my office that said "Forensics is always about winning, it's not always about winning trophies."

Through competition our students make themselves better. They learn what they are capable of accomplishing. They learn to win (and lose) with grace. They learn there is no shame in losing to someone who does a better job than you and they learn how to be better by watching the people who do a better job. They learn you can compete with someone and still be their friend; the opposition does not have to be your enemy. They learn to respectfully disagree with a position and argue with conviction against another debate team and do it with respect for the other team, for the team's ideas, and for themselves. They learn winning, while not doing their best, is a hollow victory. They learn to evaluate their own performance because they are self-aware enough to conduct self-evaluations. They earn their self-confidence, it is not given to them and therefore, it cannot be taken away. The litany of things above all happen because of competition. They are benefits derived from competition itself.

Student Leaders

Many teams operate under a familial organizational metaphor. Much the way siblings and peers have more influence over children than most parents; teams are often influenced as much or more by teammates and graduate assistants than by the director of forensics. If undergraduate leaders (whether they be officers or just varsity members) promote the activity as a "good time" and a reason to party or get drunk, that is what your team will become. If your varsity members drink alcohol or do drugs or stay up all night while at tournaments, that is what your team will likely do for years to come. Graduate students are often much closer in age to the team than the DOF and often develop a *friendlier* relationship with the team. They are viewed as "one of the guys" and that perception can be a very tenuous position in which to find one's self. Make sure your graduate students know they must be setting examples by the way they conduct themselves and that they are held to a higher standard than other graduate students in the department because they represent the program, whether they know it or not.

Rules and Guidelines

If you are looking for some words of wisdom from someone who coached for 25 years I offer the following:

1. At the introductory meeting each year I tell new students two things: (1) I will never ask you to work harder at this activity than I do. (2) I will never let you walk into a round unprepared and look foolish.

2. Establish written guidelines for what constitutes readiness for competition. Be specific and be willing to stick to it even if that means some people don't travel and sometimes you travel with a very small entry (I once took five students to a tournament on a bus because over a dozen people didn't meet the requirements for travel). Eventually the entry size issue will work itself out. A commitment to excellence is something they will benefit from for the rest

of their life.

3. Develop mantras and use them repeatedly. On one team, because so many of the students were entered in six or seven or eight events, my last comments to them before they headed off for rounds in the morning was always "This tournament can run late, it can't be our fault." And that mantra became our battle cry. Those students were not late for their rounds, they walked briskly between rounds and even when tournaments ran late we knew we didn't cause it and we took steps to help tournaments run in a timely fashion. Responsibility to the tournament was a matter of pride on the team. One of my mantras at national tournament has always been "Every round, by the numbers, letter perfect, just like in practice." This mantra reinforced my belief that that consistency was key to winning at the national level. Mantras like these reinforce team culture and give students something to hold onto when they are struggling. Fitness trainers use a *no pain, no gain* mantra, the Marine Corps shouts *Semper Fi*, and of course the movie *Jerry McGuire* brought us "*Show me the money*."

4. Don't forget to affirm the things students do outside of forensics as well. When they are in campus theatre productions or choir performances, devote meeting time to taking about it and coordinating a team night to watch it. When they receive awards, have birthdays, get into graduate school, or get jobs take the time to publically recognize and celebrate those things. After all we care about them as people not just competitors. I started posting information about what our graduating seniors were doing after graduation in the hallway outside our team room. The posters served a number of purposes. It celebrated their success, it also dispelled the myth the forensics was too hard and that you couldn't get good grades and do forensics, it showed the department what our students were doing after graduation, and quite frankly made me proud.

5. Take the time to develop team unity. Paying for a few pizzas to give the team an opportunity to have a meal together, or buying (or subsidizing the cost of) team shirts, or getting them to form an intramural sports team is time and money well spent because they develop a sense of team cohesion. They start to feel responsible for each other. The peer coaching begins to develop organically.

6. Encourage the team to look out for each other. We know better than most when our students are sick, overworked, under pressure, depressed, or emotionally or spiritually drained. When we know we have a responsibility to take steps to help them the way we would any other friend or colleague. Encourage the team to do the same thing for one another. I sometimes called it "pulling maintenance" on a student. They operate like any other high perfor-

mance machine and from time to time we need to make sure all the components are moving in harmony.

7. Set team goals to challenge them. I started developing a tiered goal system. The system had three tiers: expectations, goals, and dreams. The expectations were a "gut check" level. If we didn't meet these goals we needed to step back, regroup, identify the problem, formulate a solution, and try it again. For example with a team that had taken home a sweepstakes trophy from nationals the year before, an expectation might be we would be in the top three teams in sweepstakes at all regional tournaments the next year. Our goal was to be in the top two and the dream was to win every regional tournament we attended. Also set incremental goals. For example, a certain number of events ready for the first tournament. A certain number of events qualified for nationals by the end of the first semester. A certain number of events at nationals, a certain placing at nationals. Also set non-forensics goals. I started setting team GPA goals (as a faculty advisor I could check everyone's GPA). Establishing a team GPA goal sent the message grades were as important as what we were doing in competition (something parents seemed to like as well). Revisit your goals to make sure they are staying on track.

8. Discourage intra-team competitions. Invariably they will sprout up. Despite my discouragement two of my students bet a candy bar on who would do better in extemp on a given weekend. Because they were evenly matched I found that eventually they were simply exchanging the same candy bar week after week. By the end of the year it was a nasty looking candy bar no one wanted to eat. But in general intra-team competition leads to division. One of the other mantras I promoted was "The best thing about competing for *{fill in the school name here}* is that you don't have to compete against *{school name here}*."

Conclusion

Rebuilding a team is a labor of love. You need to have a clear vision and a thick skin. But rebuilding a team is also incredibly rewarding. Forensics activities, when engaged with rigor and good leadership, changes people lives forever. Forensics does far more than just teach students effective communication skills; it teaches them to meet challenges head-on, to think clearly and logically, to see the world from someone else's point of view, and perhaps more importantly for this generation of students, to learn to love being a part of something bigger and more important than themselves. Forensics gives them the confidence they need to face the challenges that wait for them after college.

In 25 years of coaching I have coached hundreds of students. I have had the good fortune to stay in touch with many of them. They have become amazing people: Lawyers, doctors, scientists, high school teachers, college professors, social workers, political speech writers, business men and women, authors, actors, professional speakers, models, economists, social activists, clergy, community

leaders, and parents. While they are in diverse fields, they all seem to have two things in common: they quickly rise to leadership positions and they are quick to tell you how valuable their forensics experience was to their lives.

When my graduating seniors headed off to graduate school I try to sit down with each one of them, individually or as a group, and tell them what my Ph.D. advisor told me: Because of your forensics background you won't find graduate school to be as challenging as most of your peers. They have told me it was true, many of their peers struggled with the readings and theories that seemed to come easily to my students. They were able to write papers faster and with greater organization and integrated support. They were not afraid to engage faculty in discussions during class and were often approached by faculty members about co-authoring papers and journal articles long before others in their cohort. All of that has to do with the culture of forensics, not of an individual team, but of the activity. Forensics is the *special forces* of the academy. We expect more from our students and students will almost always live up to (or down to) their leader's expectations. As you design and build your team's culture keep that in mind.

A Final Mantra
Never underestimate the value of a forensic education.

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