

PASSING THE BATON

Raising the Next Generation of Parking and Transportation Leaders

By Monica Tanksley



HAVE YOU EVER WATCHED A TRACK AND FIELD RELAY RACE? As the lead runner on each team runs the first part of the race, the next runner gets prepared. The runner anxiously times his or her teammate's arrival and begins running before the lead runner has overtaken him or her.

A relay race is won in the exchange of the baton. The runners must transfer the baton in an exchange zone; if they fail to make the exchange in this zone, the team is disqualified. The crucial moment arrives, and the lead runner surrenders the baton to the next runner. Even the smallest hesitation or miscalculation can cost the team the race.

The new generation of parking and transportation leaders is ready and waiting in the wings, and the parking and transportation baton has to be passed on to this generation. It's inevitable. If we fail to pass on our resources and industry knowledge to the next generation's up-and-coming men and women so they can run their leg of the race, they will be stranded at the starting block without a baton.



Passing It Along

We must develop, train, and mentor young parking professionals so they can develop, teach, and train other young men and women to succeed them from generation to generation. It is critical that we develop the next generation of parking and transportation leadership. If we lack the sensitivity, readiness, and willingness to train them and pass the baton, we fail to groom our future parking and transportation leaders. Gloating over our own accomplishments and not wanting to grandfather the next generation into the field because we fear this group might be more talented than us is failing to ensure successorship.

Mentoring is nothing more than a relationship through which one person empowers and equips another. Some important factors that may hinder the transfer of the parking and transportation baton are:

- Poor mentoring procedures.
- The lack of intentional mentoring.
- Incorrect/wrong mentoring.

We may tend to lack proper mentoring methodologies and procedures, and that leads to a poor quality mentoring. Proper mentoring should be a prerequisite in development of our leaders-to-be. The parking and transportation industry has a great need for well-prepared, properly trained men and women to follow in our footsteps.

Intentional Mentoring

We may also tend to skip intentional mentoring—we lack a deliberate strategy to prepare our successors. We mentor informally without a purposeful and focused strategy plan to train our trainees. We train passively or occasionally from a distance, being casual, informal, and with a lack of supervision. We allow younger staffers to tag along with us and observe and learn on their own in the hopes they will pick up on accountability and reliability. As we all know, that doesn't happen accidentally, so we need to change the way we teach on the job. We must mentor intensively with discipline, guidance, and coaching. We must manage our relationship while being focused and organized.

Good mentors produce good successors. When mentoring is unstructured and ineffective, our successors will not be well-prepared or secured. It's imperative we invest in them. A good mentorship is intentional and intensive and provides the right environment for potential leaders to rise up to their own place of influence. Weak, casual, non-focused, or disorganized mentoring is damaging.

When passing the parking and transportation baton, we must be focused and goal-oriented. We must give our trainees a sense of direction and bearing as well as a directed vision and mission. There must be a plan, a strategy, and supervision. We must invest as well as instruct.

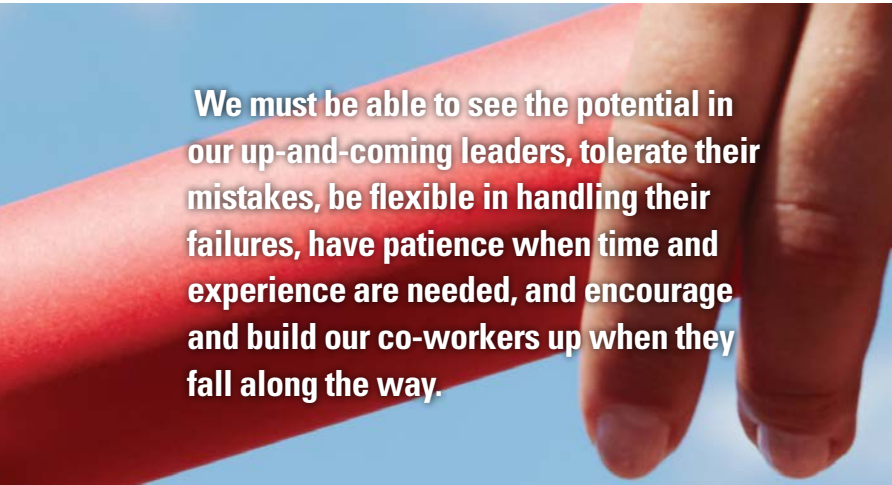
We also should be careful that as mentors we don't have a short vision, an over-domineering spirit, or become too busy to find the proper time to train. As senior staff, we must pass the benefits of our experience on to our successors.

Determining our Legacy

Before we pass the baton, however we first must make sure there is a baton to pass on and that the baton is not dropped. How can one pass on a baton if it's not there to pass, if there is no legacy or vision to pass on or leave behind? We must ask ourselves several vital questions to be sure the baton is passed:

- Do I have a next man or woman in line?
- Am I serious enough to prepare him or her?
- Do I have a plan to develop him or her?
- Am I willing to invest time in him or her?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, the baton will not be passed.



We must be able to see the potential in our up-and-coming leaders, tolerate their mistakes, be flexible in handling their failures, have patience when time and experience are needed, and encourage and build our co-workers up when they fall along the way.

We must know how to secure young men and women into the industry and propel them into their rightful places as leaders. There are several ways we can properly pass the parking and transportation baton successfully on to the next generation. We can give people proper apprenticeship training, provide the right climate for their development, empower them, and—most importantly—believe in them!

Parking and transportation's future will be digital. Working digitally will require managing digitally. Parking and transportation apps will be routinely used in everyday business operations and in every aspect of running a parking and transportation organization, from leadership development and recruitment decisions, to wage and benefit incentives. It is for this reason we need to look for what I call *altrocentric* leaders to lead.

What is an *altrocentric* leader? In past generations, leaders were categorized as *egocentric*—they used power and formal authority to get the job done and commanded results. *Altrocentric* leaders, on the other hand, keep their egos in check and view themselves as part of a greater whole of the organization. They take satisfaction in their team members' accomplishments and in being productive team players themselves. They

understand the nature of their leadership role and have an empathetic ability to attract, retain, and motivate the diversified and highly independent workforce of the future. They are not the “do as I say and say as I do” leaders of the past. *Altrocentric* leaders possess emotional intelligence, self awareness, and self control. They have the influencing skills future leaders will need to thrive in the ever-changing and challenging parking and transportation organizations of the future.

Going digital will demand leaders who aren't afraid to learn from their younger colleagues. Although technical skills will be a prerequisite in this digital era, how the potential leaders apply their skills and experience to influence and lead groups when it's time to hand off the baton will be key to their success.

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As coaches, we should focus on our employees' hidden potential and strengths, persistently urge them to anchor themselves, help set their direction, and provide motivation, skills, and applications that meet the upcoming challenges and tasks that lie ahead.

Building Confidence

Our basic functions as coaches should be to impart confidence, skills, and knowledge to the next generation. We should motivate them to bring out the best in themselves and model our principles and values. We should observe our leaders-to-be in action while evaluating them and giving them feedback. We must teach them to have patience and time, be accountable, and accept responsibility.

There are certain qualities, however, that we must expect from those in whom we are investing time and effort. We should demand a standard from our potential leaders. They must be focused and determined to push on and come up. They must be disciplined to rise to a position of influence; not being disciplined can result in a downfall.

Unfortunately, we can't turn back the clock. We can't start over. We can't insulate the new generation from the effects of the supply and demand of parking and transportation needs not being met. We can, however, transfer our parking and transportation industry morals, wisdom, values, and etiquette to the next generation.

A good leader doesn't pass the baton too soon. A great leader does not hold on to the baton too long. Learning how to pass the baton neither too soon nor too late is an art. It is an art that must be rehearsed because both the giver and the receiver need lots of practice! **P**



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