

By Daniel Lassiter, CAPP

The ability to develop talented managers for a career in the parking industry can be as challenging as teaching a child to fly fish. Though frustrating at times, I can assure you the rewards from both can be memorable! During 30 years of experience in hospitality and parking management and only half that much time as a parent, I have tackled both with the same passion and goals. The years as a developer of managers and a parent of a fly fisherman (actually a fly fisherwoman) have taught me that neither is born—they are both made.

Before you non-fishing readers decide to pass over this article, I ask you to take a moment and remember your own career development and the people whose own careers you most influenced. I am sure you've had similar challenges and rewards you draw upon for your own continued development. Each of us acting as teacher and subject matter expert have to adjust to different environments. As the fly fisherwoman must read the stream and select the proper arsenal for a successful time on the water, so must you take great care as the developer of future parking professionals.

Learning to Contribute

Early on in my career I did not understand young managers or, for that matter, my seven-year-old daughter (the fly fisherwoman) when they demanded to be allowed to make a contribution. But managers not only direct and complete tasks, they also make decisions that affect people, businesses, and careers. For her part, the fly fisherwoman must learn to cast so the line, leader, and tippet move effortlessly through the air and land the fly at a precise spot.

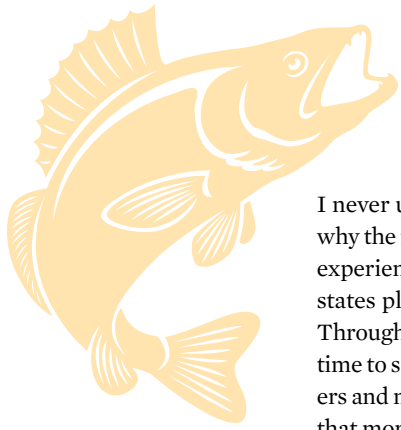
As the so-called subject matter expert, I was reluctant to give full scope to individual strength and responsibility. The idea that a manager might make a mistake and embarrass me or the organization in the eyes of customers or clients was unthinkable. I am sure we all have this recurring nightmare! And as a parent, the idea that my daughter might place a well-sharpened hook into herself or me was more than I could chance.

Early on, I gave very little freedom to either managers or my fly fisherwoman, and

A person wearing a cap and waders is standing in a river, casting a fly fishing line. In the background, there is a waterfall cascading over rocks. The scene is surrounded by lush green trees and foliage, with sunlight filtering through the leaves. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

LESSONS on the FLY

*Developing
parking managers
and teaching kids to fly fish:
They're the same thing.*



I never understood why the managers didn't excel or why the fisherwoman lost interest in the sport. My own experiences living, working, and fishing in 11 different states played a large part in my authoritative nature. Through the years I had, in some instances, very little time to settle in and give full attention to all my managers and my fly fisherwoman. In time, it became evident that more time and more freedom would be necessary to excite and engage both groups.

A River Revelation

One day as I stood in a stream and remembered my own experiences as a young parking manager and fly fisherman, I recalled having the freedom to convert objective needs into personal goals. My teachers, mentors, and coaches focused on me as a person. Their aim was to enable me to develop my strengths and abilities to the fullest extent and allow me to find individual achievement. Though there were times I struggled, I learned and grew from those situations. The parking manager developed the skills necessary to assess clients' and customers' true needs and expectations, adapting to all emergent situations, directing resources where required to meet goals by

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maintaining well-organized teams, cultivating awareness and self-actualization of personnel, and building increased investment in operations and organization. As for the fly fisherman, having spent countless days catching air, trees, and water, I finally brought fish to hand.

It was a revelation. The next day I charted a new course in the development of both future parking professionals and my young fly fisherwoman. Remembering an important and hard lesson once learned, I started from the bottom up. Placing my mantra—you get what you inspect, not what you expect—at the bottom of the page, I crafted a plan for both in hopes of effecting change, all the while mindful I must answer to a higher authority. For the parking manager, it was my own direct supervisor, and for the fly fisherwoman, it was her mother!

Taking a page from both parking and hospitality management, the parking manager's plan evolved. I share it here in hopes you may select some or all of the elements to advance the careers of future parking professionals:

- Build trust.
- Develop work standards.
- Organize and plan.
- Make decisions.
- Take action on those decisions.
- Delegate responsibility.
- Coach.
- Align performance for success.

The foundation of the program is building trust. The manager must interact with others in a way that gives them confidence in the manager's intentions. The manager must also operate with integrity, demonstrate honesty, keep and fulfill commitments, and do all of that consistently. The manager must remain open to ideas even when the ideas may conflict with his or hers. The final step for the manager to master building trust is to treat people with dignity and respect.

Without a high level of work standards, the parking professional can behave in a way that's less than professional. Many in our industry had to lay the foundation for respect and acceptance by setting high standards for self and others, assuming the responsibility and accountability for the completion of work, and self-imposing standards of excellence instead of waiting and having those standards imposed by others. Remember, there are a great number of us in the parking industry who can see clearer and farther due to the fact we are standing on the shoulders of others!

The ability to organize and plan gives meaning to the madness. The ability to establish courses of action for self and others and ensuring work is completed efficiently translates progress. Prioritizing, determining tasks and resources, allocating appropriate amounts of time, leveraging resources, and staying focused allows the manager to tackle complex or multiple projects.

Making Decisions

A fundamental element in everyday life is the ability to make decisions. Having the ability to identify and understand issues, problems, or opportunities; gathering information; interpreting the information; generating alternatives; choosing appropriate action; and committing to the action in a timely manner sets the professional manager apart. Teach new parking professionals the lost art of making decisions to ensure their longevity.

Once the decision has been made, teach managers to take action. We all have been taught to lead, follow, or get out of the way. Sometimes the concentration must be on the propensity to act versus the quality of the



action. Young parking managers must be empowered to take independent action instead of waiting for others to request action.

Delegating is a simple task for some people, but others struggle with what and how to delegate. Knowing how and when to delegate allows the parking professional to maximize the organization's and individual's effectiveness. Managers must be mindful they do not push tasks and responsibilities to others, thinking they have removed themselves from accountability.

Coaches and Leaders

Perhaps those who have participated in sports can recall a bad coach. The parking industry is no different. Coaches and leaders have the same traits: They both meet all events—favorable or not—with calmness and composure. The coach should have a love of wisdom and study the general principles of the field of knowledge and the processes governing thought, conduct, character, and behavior. Remember that coaching is much more than exerting authority. The parking manager must provide timely feedback and guidance to help others strengthen the knowledge they need to accomplish tasks or solve a problem.

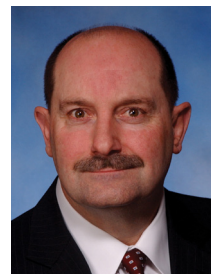
Combining all these elements creates the environment to align performance for success. It is not enough for the parking manager to recite the words and definitions of each element. To become a parking professional,

the manager must set performance goals, establish the approach, create a learning environment, track the performance, and provide meaningful evaluation.

With a written plan, I returned to the stream to contemplate the implementation. As good fortune would have it, I was able to bring fish to hand and with that, I remembered the other motivation behind my plan: the fly fisherwoman! In my haste to reward myself for finalizing the plan for the parking manager I neglected to develop one for the fly fisherwoman. Later that evening, I tried to do just that. I struggled getting words onto paper. Knowing I had limited time to engage and excite the fly fisherwoman in hopes she would once again take to the stream, I decided to become a student of the parking manager's plan. Before long, I realized the same plan could be adapted to the fly fisherwoman.

The next several years were exciting for the parking managers and the fly fisherwoman. The growth of both aided in my own growth.

Remember: Future parking professionals are all around us right now. The future of the parking industry is highly dependent on the growth of managers. Just as the fly fisherwoman one day walked out into the stream by herself, stood in the early morning light, took rod in hand, and began casting with precision and purpose, so will the manager. Develop the managers as you would the fly fisherwoman. The view from the sidelines can be enjoyable and fulfilling.



DANIEL LASSITER, CAPP, is director of business development for Allpro Parking LLC. He can be reached at dlassiter@allproparking.com.