

VC ECHOES

Valley Central Teachers' Association



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A Response To A Public Attack

Each of you received a letter from Dr. Richard Hooley with your April 6, 2007 paycheck. His letter borders on absurd and, therefore, demands a response. Perhaps if Dr. Hooley had chosen to attack me only, I would have chosen to ignore it. Instead, Dr. Hooley chose to use District time and resources to attack the entire VCTA leadership. I have the utmost respect for my fellow officers and your building representatives who freely give their time and energy to this district and community. For Dr. Hooley to feel differently demonstrates a complete lack of understanding with regard to the great things that these people accomplish every day. In fact, your representatives spent one and a half hours of a

three hour union meeting providing me with feedback on this very letter to ensure focus and accuracy. Your representatives took the time to read this response before the meeting and many of them were directly involved in the editing process.

Unlike Dr. Hooley, your VCTA officers and building representatives must be elected every one or two years. This elected leadership has chosen to keep its concerns regarding Central Office's difficulties over the past five years in-house. The VCTA leadership normally requests a private meeting with management or asks to meet with the Board of Education in executive session rather than air certain types of concerns in a public forum. It would appear that (cont'd on pg 2)

Voices of Valley Central

My concern is this ... if Dr. Hooley has a problem with the "VCTA Leadership," why did I get a letter? He should have addressed the VCTA Leadership, not the entire Valley Central Staff, which included substitutes, secretaries, paraprofessionals and custodians. As he says in his own letter, "Direct communication prevents misunderstanding and solves problems."

Personally I don't feel that Valley Central as a "whole" is the family that it has been in the past. It is hard to be a family when you feel you can't trust that what you say won't be used against

you. People can agree to disagree and still be professional and still be families.

—Erin Davis, Building Rep,
Berea Elementary

My initial reaction was why has this survey caused such fear? Why wouldn't administrators want feedback from teachers? No one is perfect, we all have room for improvement.

—Carol DeMicco, Building Rep,
Berea Elementary (cont'd on pg 12)

A Response To A Public Attack (*cont'd from cover*)

Dr. Hooley wishes to change the rules of engagement. I apologize for the length of this article, however, it has been my experience that uncorrected misinformation too often becomes the reader's reality and, unfortunately, it generally takes longer to respond to innuendo and manipulative spin than to create it. To prevent myself from rambling and keep myself on task, I accepted the advice of your building representatives and have responded to Dr. Hooley's diatribe on a point by point basis when possible. I have also asked Meghan Riley, VC Echoes Editor, to include Dr. Hooley's letter for you to refer to, if necessary, since it appears that many of you threw it in the garbage on the day that you received it.

"the Valley Central Family"

1. Of all the things that have happened in this district over the past five years that would have been ideal or opportune times for Dr. Hooley to reach out to VC staff, I find it bizarre that this survey is the impetus for such action. The union has had to be the unofficial spokesperson for Central Office's conspicuous silence with regard to so many issues that deserved and demanded communication. This has, at times placed the VCTA leadership in a very precarious position. How do we let our members know what the Superintendent's position is without making it appear that it is the position of the VCTA leadership as well? If we do not communicate what we know, our members remain in the dark; if we do communicate what we know, we risk appearing complicit.
2. Dr. Hooley referred to us as "the Valley Central Family." For the past five years **it appears that we are only a family on opening day or when this administration wishes to misinform us, make us feel guilty, or manipulate us, since previous written communications from Dr. Hooley have all identified us as VC staff.** If we were the "happy family" that Dr. Hooley is claiming, negotiations between the district and our paraprofessional and

maintenance units would have been much less contentious and polarizing; our techs, occupational and physical therapists would not have to threaten to unionize to be heard; our nutritional staff would not have elected to join NYSUT, a choice that will necessitate the payment of union dues that will surely strain their meager hourly wage; and Dr. Hooley would be equally interested in the concerns of all units. If we are still a family—we are dysfunctional at best.

"professionalism and trust"

1. Trust, at one time in abundant supply within this district, is currently in short supply. It is not the VCTA that has eroded trust within this district. VCTA representatives have not lied to nor deceived management. Can the same be said in return? **The recent payroll blunder was not a bank error as reported in the memo enclosed in our March 9th paycheck; it was, in fact, another Central Office mistake. Where is the honesty and integrity?**
2. It is, in fact, the VCTA leadership that has been forced to spend an inordinate amount of its time correcting Central Office financial errors that have amounted to hundreds of thousands of dollars in financial mismanagement. Nevertheless, Dr. Hooley has the audacity to challenge the VCTA leadership's professionalism and trustworthiness. Consultation with the VCTA leadership has become a bi-weekly event for VCTA members as well as members of other bargaining units to ensure that they are not going to be victims of another Central Office error. VCTA vice-presidents have continued to watchdog these errors without release time, as many other local union leaders have, and without airing this "dirty laundry" to the public, until Dr. Hooley's letter necessitated a response.
3. The VCTA leadership is (cont'd on pg 3)

A Response To A Public Attack (*cont'd from pg 2*)

organized, professional, competent and principled. Can the same be said of Central Office leadership? **If Dr. Hooley is truly interested in the climate that he has created within this school community lately and the impact that this climate has had upon professionalism and trust, he would develop his own anonymous survey to test the waters. This, however, would require a true desire to know the truth and create positive change.** Of course, the VCTA could create and tally a survey for Dr. Hooley if he is reluctant to listen to his own “family’s” concerns.

“disheartening to learn that the VCTA leadership”

1. It was disheartening for the entire VCTA membership when Dr. Hooley chose to not address Montgomery Elementary’s concerns; it was disheartening for the VCTA when Dr. Hooley chose to make light of Maybrook Elementary’s increased work load due to construction; it was disheartening for the VCTA when Dr. Hooley did not address East Coldenham’s construction concerns without prompting from VCTA officers; **it is disheartening for the VCTA to know that our members rarely receive satisfaction with regard to Central Office mistakes without VCTA oversight.**
2. I was disheartened to learn, in a recent conversation with Dr. Hooley regarding an ambiguity in the Taylor Law, that Dr. Hooley is not inclined to permit VCTA members to have union representation during initial disciplinary interviews. Dr. Hooley stated that he did not understand why union officers would want to appear to be defending bad people. I find it disheartening that lower-level employees are thus prejudged (view the April VC Echoes for more information on this issue). I also find it disheartening that Dr. Hooley has failed to recognize two of the primary functions of a union—to guarantee members’ that their rights are protected and to speak collectively with one

voice.

3. I was also disheartened to learn that when asked if there was any research that connected or correlated per pupil expenditure with testing results/data at the April 12th State of the District meeting, Dr. Hooley’s only response was that teachers would like the per pupil expenditure to increase so they could be paid more money. Dr. Hooley never answered the question but did indicate that he was satisfied with our current per pupil expenditure and that we get good results for what we spend. So much for professionalism, support and trust. This would have been a golden opportunity to lobby for more resources and infrastructure rather than take a cheap shot at one of the hardest working, but lowest paid staffs in the county. With comments such as this, perhaps divorce is inevitable for our family.

“answer what they have heard rather than what they have experienced”

1. Let me identify the qualifications of the respondents to this survey. Teachers are professionals with both bachelors and masters degrees. Most of us have had experience with multiple administrators and many respondents have taught within multiple curriculum areas and multiple school districts. Many of our members also have administrative certification. **Does Dr. Hooley think so little of teachers that he honestly believes we are incapable of objectivity?** If this is the case, then why would this District entrust us with the most important job in the world—educating this community’s children? The following email was sent to me by one of our members: “One point that was stated was NOT TRUE—that people reported what they heard, not experienced...Tim, many said to me that they responded Not [to] what they Heard, but Only [to] what applied to them personally...directly [the] opposite—[Dr. Hooley] calls us liars.”
(*cont'd on pg 4*)

A Response To A Public Attack (*cont'd from pg 3*)

2. Dr. Hooley makes decisions all the time based on what he has heard since he is seldom in buildings to observe what is taking place. **Should we assume that Dr. Hooley believes his building administrators are all trustworthy, but teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, custodians and, most particularly, VCTA officers and building representatives are not?**

"not all in the district have a voice"

1. Everyone in this district would have a voice if Dr. Hooley would choose to be the superintendent of all "family members." Dr. Hooley has chosen to ignore the voices of many. The VCTA has intervened and added our voice not only to our own members' concerns (i.e., teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries), but also to the unanswered concerns of our maintenance and custodial "family members," our nutritional staff "family members," our technology staff "family members," our occupational and physical therapy staff "family members" and yes, even our Central Office and building administration "family members." The VCTA has lobbied diligently and tirelessly on behalf of our administrative staff—helping to ensure that they receive the support and compensation that they deserve for attempting to do a monumental task. Dr. Hooley did not take exception to the fact that the VCTA supported improvements in superintendent salary and benefit packages as well as increases in staffing for some administrative departments.
2. One administrator said it would make the survey invalid if all units answered the survey since management's relationship with various units would necessitate changes in the types of questions that should be posed. So what should we do? **Central Office has repeatedly reminded the VCTA leadership that we do not represent certain groups such as LOAs (Leaves of Absences) and, therefore, should remain silent with regard to their salary, benefits, etc. It would now appear that**

Central Office wishes us to represent everyone. Perhaps Central Office should make up its mind with regard to this before publicly criticizing—you can't have it both ways.

3. A district custodial unit member, after reading Dr. Hooley's letter, stated that custodians are quite capable of doing their own survey; they do not need to have the teachers create one for them; they would be happy to create and complete a survey, if Dr. Hooley feels they have been "left out of the loop."

"representatives to speak frankly and specifically to building & district administrators"

1. Representatives of the VCTA are in constant communication with both building and central office administration. VCTA representatives are both blunt and honest when they communicate with management. However, when administration refuses to acknowledge the right of VCTA representatives to speak on behalf of their members, other avenues must be pursued. In fact, it was Dr. Hooley's Assistant Superintendent, Pamela Roberts, who insisted that representation forms be signed before she would communicate with VCTA representatives with regard to member issues. What should the VCTA Executive Council do if Central Office refuses to acknowledge the right of elected VCTA representatives to speak on behalf of members within a building when virtually all of these members have signed representation forms? If following the chain of command does not result in positive change, it is Dr. Hooley's responsibility to intervene. **Dr. Hooley is supposed to be the superintendent of all "family members" and should not have to be reminded of this fact.**

"[what if] parents, students, coworkers and taxpayers criticized [teachers'] work"

1. **Outside criticism of staff occurs every year and, yes, Central Office and the** (cont'd on pg 5)

A Response To A Public Attack (cont'd from pg 4)

BOE often listen. Teachers and administrators are routinely criticized—it goes with the job. The problem is that these criticisms are often given credibility. One of our members who was recently denied tenure was told by the building principal that Central Office had received multiple parental complaints. This member was never informed about these complaints and, therefore, was never informed as to what these concerns were or who was raising these concerns. If these complaints had no bearing on this member's tenure, why mention them?

MY DISAPPOINTMENT:

1. What I find most disappointing is that not one administrator in the 21 years I have been at VC has developed his/her own survey to elicit feedback from the staff. In fact, Kevin McFadden, one of our VCTA retiree representatives, stated that he cannot recall this ever happening. In a collaborative effort to improve instruction, the APPR committee included student assessment instruments as a part of the acceptable alternative assessment repertoire. **It is amusing that management believes children can provide legitimate feedback to teachers that could be helpful in improving instruction, communication, classroom climate, etc., yet contend that adults with professional certification have nothing to offer an administrative supervisor with regard to these same issues.**
2. Feedback provided to all employees, including administrators, is a crucial component toward self-improvement. I heard from one administrator recently: "Who is a teacher to evaluate me?" I did not know there was an institutional caste system at Valley Central. **The assessment instrument utilized by the VCTA is not an evaluation; it is a survey designed to provide honest feedback and no one is in a better position to provide constructive feedback to managers than those who work under them.**

ANONYMITY:

1. According to the Office of Educational Assessment (OEA) at the University of Connecticut, "It is essential that survey participants...feel that their anonymity is maintained. If not, surveys will either not be filled out, or will have self-censored data." Dr. Hooley, however, would like us to believe that the experts are wrong. He believes that names must be attached for accuracy and validity. The Valley Central School District is spending \$75,000 on professional development for teachers and administrators with regard to the value of data driven accountability. **The data with regard to surveys supports the VCTA's position that surveys, to be valid, must be anonymous.**
2. Keep in mind that the VCTA's assessment instrument is not an evaluation tool, it is a survey designed to provide feedback for individual administrators, particularly with regard to how they interact with our membership. As the data indicates, honest feedback is unlikely in an environment in which names are attached to participants' answers. If surveys can only be valid with names attached, as Central Office would have us believe, then most Superintendent Conference Day surveys are completely invalid since names are optional and most participants do not sign these forms. Additionally, building administrators complete an email survey for the Superintendent each year. Obviously, if they are returning this survey via email, their names are attached. They are also given the option of returning the survey anonymously via interoffice mail. Unless all or most administrators opt for option two, however, anonymity is an unrealistic expectation. With a large portion of our middle managers untenured, the Superintendent's survey has all the trappings of a predetermined, invalid assessment. Additionally, the Superintendent's annual evaluation by the BOE is anonymous. (cont'd on pg 6)

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Is the BOE's evaluation of our Superintendent, therefore, invalid; or is it a useful tool for the Superintendent to monitor his effectiveness, including his clarity of expression, willingness to listen, and perceived concern for the VC Community.

FINALLY, I would like to speak directly to our administrators who will all receive a copy of this Special Edition of the Echoes.

1. At no time in the 21 years that I have been at VC has the teacher bargaining unit ever demonstrated a lack of support for our fellow bargaining units, including administration. It appears that some administrators believe teachers should demonstrate blind trust in them while they are apparently demonstrating a complete lack of trust with regard to the VCTA leadership, despite an impeccable record of support. Administration (both Dr. Hooley and the administration unit president) were given a heads up with regard to this survey and the survey was delivered to their president's office as promised before it was implemented. We did not specifically tell administration the day and time the survey would be distributed and did not perceive this to be problematic—we had shared our intent and a copy of the survey to be utilized. Additionally, representatives in one of our buildings requested that we not announce the exact day and time that the survey would be distributed. In this particular building, the relationship between VCTA members and administration is strained and members feared reprisal. The tension and mistrust present in this building was brought to the attention of Dr. Hooley many times. Dr. Hooley downplayed these concerns and refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of these concerns unless individuals came forward with "name, rank and serial number." **A crucial purpose and responsibility of unions is to create an organization that allows members a voice through elected representatives. Dr. Hooley dis-**
- missed this system of representation as invalid and failed to reach out to these members in any other way that would have demonstrated concern.**
2. It was made clear that this survey would not be public and results would not even be shared with our own general membership since the ultimate purpose involves self-reflection and positive change. I would like to add that Dr. Hooley's objection to not receiving more details about the survey is ironic considering he did not give me a heads up concerning his April 6th letter attacking the VCTA leadership. Perhaps he should take the log out of his own eye before attempting to take the splinters out of ours.
3. Administrators need to recognize that modeling is the most important component of effective leadership! Demonstrate that you care about the opinions of your staff. Solicit feedback not only from those who will surely tell you what you want to hear, thus making you feel comfortable and justified, but also from those who may not look upon the world and, therefore, your leadership, in the same light as those you know and respect. What you do with this information is entirely up to you. It is time that both administrators and teachers stop whining and complaining. All of us are capable of improving. None of us have achieved perfection.
4. **The VCTA leadership has offered the following compromise to management: create your own assessment instrument/survey and tally your own results.** It would be greatly appreciated by Vice President Richard Steger, who has spent many days reading and statistically analyzing the data collected.
5. Effective and successful administrators lead by example just as effective and successful teachers do so in the classroom. In fact, one of the SED's major initiatives is to increase *(cont'd on pg 7)*

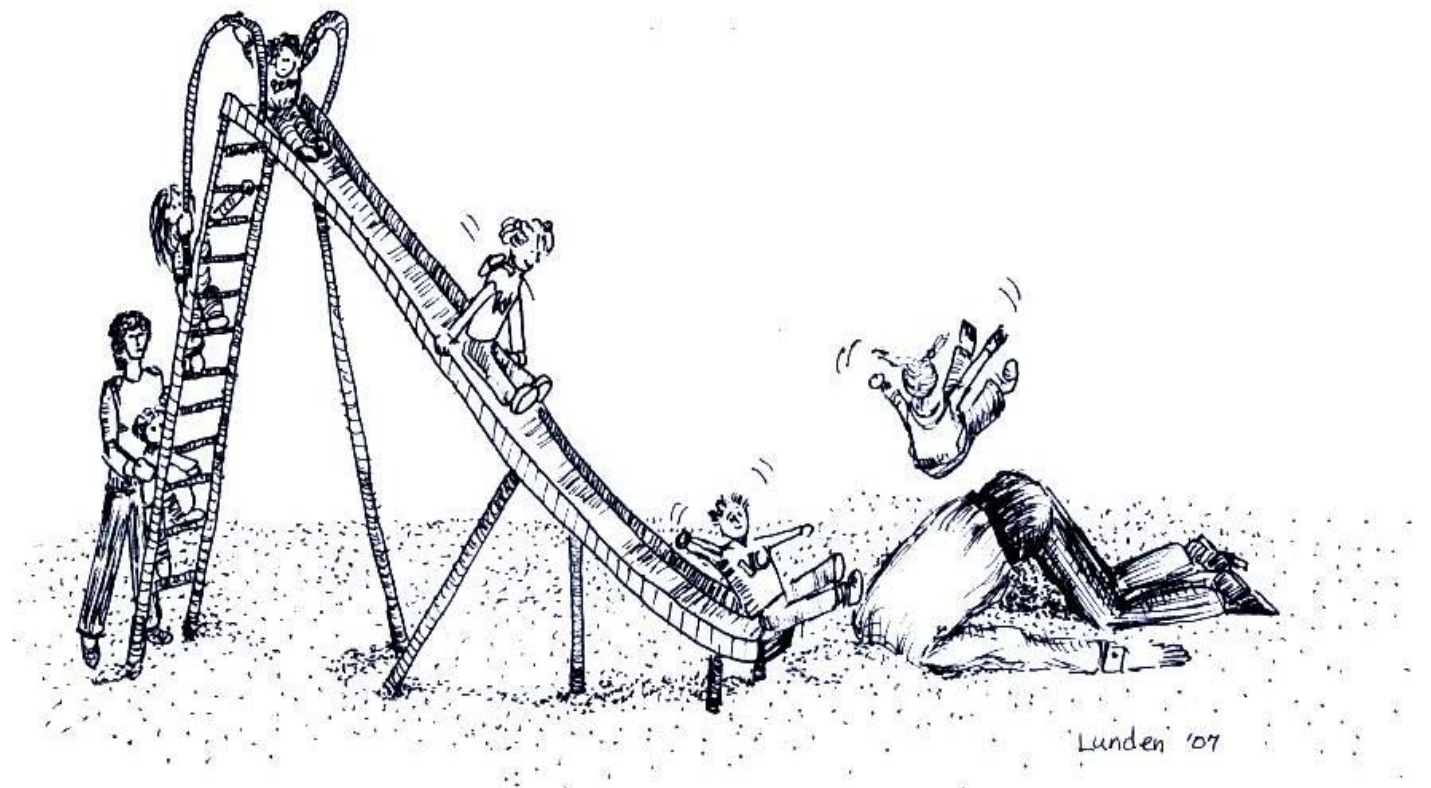
A Response To A Public Attack (cont'd from pg 6)

administrative accountability. Assessments and surveys were specifically mentioned as vital tools to be utilized in promoting this initiative. Administrators should be educational leaders and in leading they must also listen. When subordinates feel that they are not being heard they tend to raise their collective voice. We have raised our collective voice. **You may choose to listen or to ignore us. If you ignore our concerns, you will be leaders in title only. If you listen, you will be leaders in every way that is important to create positive change.** I teach my students in health class that becoming a father or mother is easy, but becoming a daddy or mommy requires acts of love and commitment. All teachers and administrators should ask themselves if they have a love

and commitment for the work that they do on behalf of children. If the answer is no, please find a new occupation.

6. The VCTA leadership and membership have striven to work collaboratively with every administration during the years that I have been at Valley Central. Though we have never been the highest paid staff in Orange County, we get results and we work exceptionally hard. Ask anyone who has ever worked at Valley Central and they will tell you—if they left, they miss the people—if they have stayed, they did so because of the people. Who are these people? First and foremost—over 5,000 children that must remain the central focus of our love and commitment. (cont'd on pg 8)

Administrative Supervision?



A Response To A Public Attack (*cont'd from pg 7*)

Second—all of the members of the various bargaining units (i.e. nutritional staff, teacher unit members, paraprofessionals, secretaries, maintenance & custodial staff, techs, OT/PT, admin). We have always been a family of people who have cared about each other and the children in our charge.

7. The VCTA has worked diligently and collaboratively with Central Office throughout the years; in fact, the VCTA leadership has made numerous excuses and downplayed many Central Office mistakes because we believed Central Office was sincere in its desire and diligent in its efforts to correct these mistakes. As many of you know, this has caused me some discomfort; some members have taken me to task for defending and protecting Central Office (i.e., Dr. Hooley) when they believed I should be taking him to task. While many will now be pleased that I have “seen the light,” others will be discomforted and will long for a return to civility. I also wish for this. **It is my hope that VCTA members will one day be able to deal directly with Central Office without the need for union representation to ensure fairness and adherence to contract; however, that day has not yet arrived.**

8. It is not the goal of the VCTA to have a contentious relationship with Central Office; in fact, the VCTA leadership and Central Office are currently making progress on several issues: Dr. Hooley and I are still meeting independently; cabinet meetings with the VCTA leadership and Central Office administrators continue; and your committee volunteers are working hard as usual. However, as your union president, I will not allow member voices to be unheard or unrepresented. Most superintendents will at least pretend interest and concern when disagreements occur. When unfairly attacked, the VCTA leadership will stand up and fight for itself, the general membership, and for what is right for children. **Until challenged in a public and misguided attempt to control our union activities, the VCTA leadership had taken the high road, choosing not to embarrass Central Office in a public forum. We hope that Dr. Hooley can find his way back to the high road and truly lead his “family”—especially the children—into the future.**

—Tim Brown

“There are no greater advocates for children and education than teachers and teacher unions.”



Dr. Hooley's Letter



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OFFICE OF THE
SUPERINTENDENT

RICHARD M. HOOLEY, Ed.D.

April 2007

Dear Members of the Valley Central Family,

An atmosphere of professionalism and trust is essential to our work together. Suspicion and discord are demoralizing and exhausting; good work is hard to do in a culture of mistrust. This is why it was disheartening to learn that VCTA leadership recently asked staff to complete anonymous surveys of building administrators.

Such conduct not only compromises professional integrity, it divides faculty and staff, and results in incomplete, unsubstantiated reports: an anonymous survey lets people answer using what they have *heard* rather than what they have *experienced*. In addition, the collection of anonymous data from teachers alone sends a troubling message, especially to new employees, that not all in this district have a voice.

Unions exist to protect individual workers and to allow their representatives to speak frankly and specifically to building and district administrators. Such direct discussions are one reason why Valley Central boards and the superintendents have traditionally disregarded anonymous suggestions and correspondence. Imagine how damaging it would feel to teachers if parents, students, coworkers and taxpayers criticized your work to the Board of Education without identifying themselves and providing details.

Direct communication prevents misunderstanding and solves problems; rumors and nameless complaints can lead to character assassination and witch-hunts but not to solutions. We must work together to repair this breach of trust and must continue using the appropriate existing processes, processes that this anonymous survey damaged and ignored.

We want you to know that this district's administrators remain available to all employees; we enlist your help in maintaining a culture of trust and openness. Exercise your right to use your union representatives, but remember, too, that if you are unhappy or dissatisfied with your situation or others' behavior, the best approach is a personal conversation with your direct administrator.

Experience in all kinds and sizes of school districts has demonstrated how valuable, but also how vulnerable, a positive culture based on integrity and care can be. Please help protect this resource by avoiding anonymous surveys and by continuing to deal with one another honestly, forthrightly, and professionally. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard M. Hooley".

Richard M. Hooley, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

/sr

Employee Survey: Anonymity Might Help Spur Truth About Boss (Lesson On Leadership)

Some people think that focusing on results is the sole responsibility of leadership.

Superior leaders find a balance between getting results and how they go about getting them. Superior leaders get results and do it in a way that makes their organization a place where people enjoy coming to work. Commitment and dedication can't be forced down from the top but must be kindled through attention to good human resources practices. If you build a team of dedicated and focused people, you will get superior results with people willing to change-and in a world of constant change, that sounds pretty good.

"I don't lead by command and control. I am a caring boss," Robert said somewhat defensively.

"How so?" I asked.

I bring in doughnuts once a month. I gave Susie a day off last week to see her Aunt. I have an 'open door' policy. I make a point to walk around the floor every day to check on things and say hello to my employees. I treat them well. Remember though, I'm not running a kindergarten. This is a business. This is my livelihood."

While Robert is an effective leader, he still has some room for growth. When it comes to employee attitude, it is not what the boss herself thinks about her own attitude and approach toward employees, it is all about what the employee feels. You can have the best of intentions, but if an employee feels that you operate by fear and intimidation, it is their opinion that counts-their opinion influences how they act.

As they say, "The road to heck was paved with good intentions."

Some people will be comfortable and work well with your style.

Others may not be doing their best work because they don't enjoy the way they feel they are treated. As the psychologists say, it is the concept of "individual differences" that creates the phenomenon where you tell two people to pick up the mess. One sees you as a leader and the other sees you as a dictator. Like beauty, it's in the eyes of the beholder.

"I don't think that any of my employees have any problems with the way I treat them, because if they did, they would tell me."

You may believe that, you may hope that is so because you know your intention and what you would do.

You may well be a real take-charge leader, ready to take head-on whatever the world gives you. You have been through enough that you probably have tough skin. If you had a boss that irritated you, you would tell them. That's you. But ... are your employees of the same constitution and make up as you?

If an employee is more passive, less aggressive, quieter than the boss or highly respectful, the likelihood is that she/he would feel uncomfortable stepping up to the boss. If an employee feels intimidated by the boss' style, telling their superior is the last thing they would probably do. They would more likely tell other employees, their friends and family-maybe even the customers.

Catching on quickly, Robert said, "OK, I realize that it is not my intentions, but how they think I come across that drives their behavior. But if I really want to know what they think, and they probably won't tell me, how do I go about finding out? Ask my barber?"

"That might generate an interesting response, but there are better ways," I suggested.

There are several approaches you can use, but one of the best is an anonymous survey. You can get help on this or you can think about what you would really like to know from them, and then turn that into a list of questions. Allow them to respond anonymously, summarize the data, and you will have their opinions as a snap shot in time.

Hearing what your employees think could give you reason to consider making alterations in your approach. Building a strong team requires give and take.

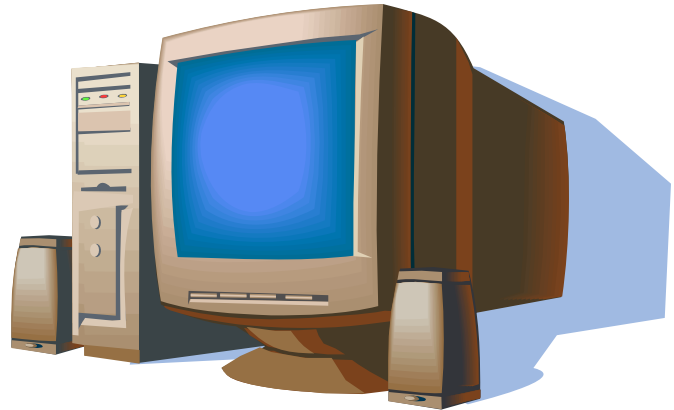
However, don't forget the advice of the sages, 'If you're not prepared to deal with the answer, don't ask the question.'

LESSON: Open and honest feedback from employees is a necessity if you want to know what is on their minds. Their feedback will tell you if you are actually creating, in their minds, the kind of environment that fosters commitment and dedication. Consider using an anonymous survey.

This article was written by Terry Stuller, Owner of Wenatchee Human Resources Consulting, and appeared in the Wenatchee Business Journal, April 2003. It was purchased from GOLIATH, an online business content service and has been reprinted with Terry Stuller's permission.

What Does the Internet Say About Anonymous Surveys?

To address Dr. Hooley's concerns regarding the accuracy and validity of anonymous surveys, the VCTA leadership has provided the following quotes and corresponding web links:



1. "Intimate, personal questions are sometimes best handled by mail or computer, where anonymity is most assured."
2. "If you hand out questionnaires on your premises, you obviously cannot remain anonymous, but keep the bias problem in mind when you consider the answers."
 - <http://www.surveysystem.com/sdesign.htm>
 - http://www.armacapacific.org/leadership/presentations/breakout/Survey_Design.pdf
3. "Furthermore, questions that are perceived as 'personal' may make students more defensive and believe that their anonymity is being violated, thus altering their subsequent responses."
4. "It is essential that survey participants, especially students, feel that their anonymity is maintained. If not, surveys will either not be filled out, or will have self-censored data."
5. "Summary results should be reviewed to look for possible bias. Common sources for bias in questionnaires include:
6. "Sample bias...Untruthful/Misrepresentative answers. While this is immeasurable, active lying is probably rare. What is undoubtedly more common are rote answers from disinterested or fatigued respondents ("I will just fill in the middle category to save time"). This reinforces the need for a succinct and anonymous survey."
 - http://oea.uchc.edu/OEAwebpage/tips_goodsurveys.htm
 - http://www.armacapacific.org/leadership/presentations/breakout/Survey_Design.pdf
7. "Keep all information on the survey anonymous. This means it should contain *no identifying information*, such as a code number, name, birth date, or address. If there is a need for follow-up with the participants, so that the survey requires a code number, the data must be kept *confidential* (this is *not* the same as anonymous), and the surveys and code numbers must be kept separate and in a secure place at all times. Since this is *very* hard to do in a class situation, the IRB recommends sticking to anonymous, one-phase study designs."
 - <http://www.usu.edu/policies/pdf/Research-Approval.pdf>
 - <http://www.usu.edu/research/irb/teachers.cfm>
8. "Research has shown that when people feel that their responses to survey questions are anonymous, they tend to respond honestly."
 - <http://www.siena.edu/studentaffairs/socialnorms.asp>

VALLEY CENTRAL
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION



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VCTA Executive Council Building Representatives

- **Berea:** Erin Davis, Robin Sinclair-Scott, Carol DeMicco
- **East Coldenham:** Holly Bacon, Denise Pagliocca
- **Maybrook:** Donna Lloyd, Sandy Tarallo
- **Montgomery:** Gail Nozell, Jane Dionne, Melinda Sulzbach, Mike Gonzales (A)
- **Walden:** Kathy Bordone, Patricia Joy, Mary Ellen Mangiamiele, Lori Myerson
- **Middle School:** Mary Bleau, Tammy Coleman, Joe Collins, Joe DeVenuto, Sandy Strauss
- **High School:** Bob Jurgens, Mindy Kane, Peter Meisel, Christine Mello, Antoinette Oakes, Eileen Purcell, Meghan Riley, Diane Ruggles, Carolyn Zayas, Lisa Aguilera (A), Jennie Meehan (A), Kerri Meyer (A), Keith Sexton (A), Glenn Taylor (A)
- **Secretarial Representative:** Pamela Cunningham (B)
- **Paraprofessional Representative:** Kathy Lennon (W)

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Any articles submitted to the VC Echoes will also be posted on the VCTA web site.

Voices of Valley Central (cont'd from cover)

Concerning the staff evaluation of building principals, I agree with Dr. Hooley's statement that an atmosphere of professionalism and trust is essential for labor and management to work together. I do, however, have to take him to task on at least one of his views on this matter.

Like respect, trust is something that needs to be earned. Principals who are fair and just in their dealings with a building's staff will gain the trust and respect of said staff members. Such principals would have nothing to fear from staff evaluations. As in all things, a person who has done nothing wrong has nothing to fear from people who are fair and just.

In his recent letter to the Valley Central staff, Dr. Hooley states that "an anonymous survey lets people answer using what they have heard rather than what they have experienced." I question that statement because all teachers have daily, weekly, and monthly dealings with principals. Why would they need to base their surveys on what they have heard when they can more easily and truthfully base it on daily/weekly dealings with administration? Another question that comes to mind is would any teacher "turn" on a principal if that principal has done his/her job properly? I know that we do not live in a perfect world, but I believe that teachers, as a rule, are much too fair to do such a dastardly deed. We are, after all, professionals.

While staff evaluations of administrators are not unprecedented in our union's history, they have been a somewhat rare commodity. Having said that, are they truly something to be feared? I believe not. Like teacher evaluations by administrators, they can let you know if things are going well and can also let you know when some corrections may be in order. Evaluations are said to improve how teachers do their job: can they do any less for the building principals of the Valley Central School District?

—Joe DeVenuto, Building Rep

Middle School