

The Importance of Leadership

BY ANGELA ROBERTS, CPA

In May, I attended my first AICPA Spring Council as COCPA Chair. Networking and exchanging ideas with our profession's leaders from all over the country reminded me how important leadership is not only to make sure we're growing our profession's future leaders but also for us as current leaders to continue to evolve on our own leadership path.

Last year, I had the opportunity to connect with COCPA's future leaders through a virtual four-course series. We focused on four key areas:

Leadership and environment: We discussed and defined what leadership means to each of us, evaluated where we are on our journeys, and determined our personal paths to becoming the most successful and effective leaders we can be.

Power of choice and collaboration: We learned the process of defining success, building a collective roadmap, and achieving the desired outcome whether you are working one-on-one or with a team.

Trust and credibility: We discussed the details of building and maintaining trust – day in and day out.

Effective resolution: Having a difficult conversation can maintain or foster a better relationship – and even build trust. We learned detailed guidelines and a process to help prepare for these types of conversations.

CONTINUING TO EVOLVE AS LEADERS

Becoming a leader is a life-long process. I see this every day in the candidates I interview and in my own personal and professional life. It takes time to learn and navigate the path to being effective. We can continue to build our own leadership qualities and skills, but we need to take definitive action to make it happen. Some ideas:

Identify your motivation. Before you can grow as a leader, you must know the "why" behind your drive.

Identify your flaws. Everyone has flaws, but when you understand your own you can embrace all of who you are. Maybe you need to listen more, show more empathy, or even share your flaws with others and lead by example.

Learn from your failures. Growing as a leader means developing the ability and willingness to have your failures shape you. Failure is instructive; it allows you as a leader to learn.

Appreciate feedback. View all feedback as a gift and an opportunity to develop. The best leaders realize feedback helps them improve so they can do better.

Listen to those with more experience. Even leaders can find someone with more experience. When you connect with more senior leaders, they can teach you to listen when you want to speak, to stop and think when you want to react, to keep trying when you want to quit.

Invest in yourself. Create an environment in which you can invest in yourself so you can be at your best. Make time to read; surround yourself with smart people and experts.

A BRIGHT FUTURE

As I interact with our profession's up and coming leaders, I'm excited. These younger professionals are smart, enthusiastic, and ready to learn. Let's continue to share our journeys with them and welcome what they're bringing to the table. We all can grow together and lead this profession into the future. ▲

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