

From the President: A "Leadership Approach to Bring CEDA Debate Into the Twenty-First Century

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The spring before my CEDA (Cross Examination Debate Association) Presidency, Gary Larson (CEDA Executive Secretary), reported CEDA's membership at two hundred and twelve schools. This continued a decline in membership during the past eight years, from three hundred and fifteen schools in 1989, two hundred and thirty-six in 1994, to two hundred and twelve in 1996. Larson's report further noted that while large (national circuit) tournaments grew in popularity, small regional tournaments were shrinking, with the largest declines occurring in novice and junior divisions. (Larson, 1996 p.1) His report sent a clear message: CEDA was and is an organization in need of change.

Since my area of research is leadership, I turned to leadership theory for guidance in preparing for my year as president. Transformational leadership offers the most promise for organizations such as CEDA because it emphasizes values, ethics, long term goals and can be used to change individuals, organizations and cultures. Even though the transformational leader is significant in creating change, according to Peter Northouse, "followers and leaders are inextricably bound together in the transformation process." (Northouse, 1997 p. 130) Transformational leadership occurs when leaders:

stimulate interest among colleagues and followers to view their work from new perspectives, generate awareness of the mission or vision of the team and organization, develop colleagues and followers to higher levels of ability and potential, and motivate colleagues and followers to look beyond their own interests toward those that will benefit the group. (Bass & Avolio, 1994 p.2)

Two leadership researchers, Tichy and DeVanna, were interested in how transformational leadership theory could be used to transform an organization. They wanted to know how leaders worked during these difficult times where "challenging conditions brought about by rapid technological change, social and cultural changes, increased competition, and increased interdependence with economies of other nations." (Northouse, 1997 p. 141) I was interested in the best way to lead an organization like CEDA, facing challenging conditions brought about by technology, diversity, loss of membership, rising costs, and increased competition with other formats of debate. Tichy and DeVanna's interviews with CEO's of companies exposed a form

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of transformational leadership. They identified a three act process (Tichy & DeVanna 1986, 1990) which describes the leadership process I attempted to use for CEDA. Although the pace of change has been gradual during my term of office, I am convinced that transformational leadership is the best approach to lead CEDA into the twenty-first century.

Act 1 of Tichy and Devanna's process stresses the *need* for change. They explain that many organizations want to retain the status quo and see no clear reason to change. CEDA has many different factions who view change differently. The two major groups include those who would like to return to the way CEDA was seven or more years ago when the emphasis on debate was a balance of analysis, communication, and evidence, the regional debate experience, and a gathering of all teams to meet using a random process to debate at the national tournament. Many members who prefer the "old CEDA" have already departed to participate in other formats of debate such as the National Parliamentary Debate Association, National Forensic Association's Lincoln Douglas, National Debate Education Association, or Public Forum Debate. The remaining faction consists of members who are fairly satisfied with the direction of debate in CEDA, and prize more advanced debate requiring high school and/or summer institute experience, emphasis on research and critical thinking, rapid delivery, and mutual preference judging.

Since transformational leaders are change agents it is their responsibility to recognize a need for change and to identify how change can positively or negatively affect their organization. After listening to many opposing views from members all across the United States, I identified several serious problems that affect almost everyone in our organization, regardless of their faction. The following committees were formed to address these pressing problems:

Costs of Debate: One committee was asked to examine ways to reduce costs in debate so that large numbers of students and schools could continue in the activity. They are working on a plan that includes suggestions for cost reductions at tournaments for judging, travel, housing, obtaining debate scholarships, increasing budgets, and establishing endowments.

Quality of Life: Another group was assigned was to study the effects of tournament travel and length of season on students lives, particularly their health, academics, ability to pursue other activities, and gaining/holding necessary employment. This group is also addressing the abuse of tobacco, drugs, and alcohol in our activity.

Professionalism: Another committee was formed to assist our colleagues in reaching their professional goals. A continuation of the work done in the American Forensics Association on

tenure guidelines is essential. A plan or blueprint is needed for young coaches, listing graduate programs for those interested in continuing in our activity. CEDA needs to take an active role in promoting scholarship, including students in faculty research, and informing administrations about our colleagues' achievements.

Technology: Another pre-existing committee was established to examine access to technology for research and debate, divine rules for using evidence from these sources, and suggest methods for teaching our debaters information management.

New Members: Another pre-existing committee assembled a new edition of our newcomer debate book. The committee's work was expanded to examine the recidivism of novice debaters after their novice eligibility lapsed, and to explore ways to broaden participation for those students without high school debate experience.

Advocates for Diversity: The purpose of this standing committee was to continue its ongoing work in increasing the number of women and minorities in debate, and addressing the problems of women, minorities, gays and lesbians, and physically disabled, while participating in CEDA.

Preparation For the Public Sphere: This committee was established to investigate how schools use debate to prepare their students to be advocates in the public sphere. Research is necessary to study and promote the link between the debate activity and future leadership and contributions to public life.

Student Leadership: Recent legislation mandated the inclusion of students in the decision making process for CEDA. A newly graduated student was appointed to assist the elected student leaders from each region in organizing and establishing plans for their direction.

Even though the committee tasks were ambitious, there was a tremendous response from the membership for service on all these committees. There was agreement that these committees addressed serious problems in our debate activity, and no known resistance to the ideas occurred.

The second act in changing an organization is creating a *vision*. The vision establishes a framework to reach the ideal of the organization. (Tichy and DeVanna, 1986, p. 128) The 1996-1997 team of officers worked to create the following vision and specific goals:

VISION

CEDA is a diverse organization representing our increasing multicultural population. CEDA prepares students for participation in the public sphere and future careers by offering opportunities to analyze, research, manage and organize information, evaluate and communicate ideas, and experience personal growth by working together with coaches, directors, and leaders of all formats of debate, in a congenial setting that promotes fairness, civility, and respect for all.

"We, the current and next two Presidents of CEDA believe that our vision will become reality when":

- Free expression and First Amendment values are emphasized as the heart of our activity.
- Students are encouraged and provided opportunities to participate in the struggle for social justice and change.
- More members of under-represented groups are participating.
- Broader support is provided for students who did not debate in high school.
- Broader support is provided for students who do not have debate scholarships.
- Costs of debate are reduced to allow greater participation.
- Broader support is provided for members who coach but do not have debate experience.
- Academic performance is rewarded and does not suffer as a result of participation in debate.
- The debate season allows all participants to grow and experience quality of life outside of debate.
- Quality educational debate through a variety of formats is emphasized for all of our students as a tool for life after college.
- Opportunities exist for students to be involved in decision making and to learn leadership.
- Professional and tenure development of coaches and directors is promoted.
- Members are recognized for service to the organization.
- Members are recognized for volunteering their debate expertise within their university and local communities.

The vision statement and goals were accepted by the CEDA executive board and community. The executive board chose "Speaking A New World" as a catch phrase to identify the new direction of CEDA. The choice of the phrase was appropriate to the voices of the executive board. When they were asked to choose a part of the vision that they would emphasize

in their region, the majority of the members chose diversity issues such as better representation of under-represented people.

Act 3 is the most difficult part of the transformational process, *institutionalizing change*. Members of the CEDA community accepted the vision but were and are skeptical about the possibility of achieving these future goals. To reach the CEDA vision and goals, old structures must be broken down and new ones must be established. Recently, a new committee was established to choose a new format of debate for CEDA. This would assist students in preparing for advocacy in the public sphere. The committee includes a group of coaches from different debate backgrounds, all of whom recognize the need for a new debate format. The new format should also reduce entry level barriers. New coalitions must be established with individuals most receptive to change. The "old boy network" of debate needs to be disbanded and all members of the activity should be invited to contribute to the vision and goals and empowered to make decisions.

The number of women debating at Nationals has increased 12.1% during the past seven years, from 28.7% in 1991 to 36% in 1994, to 40.8% in 1997. Our national tournament includes more women, but the number of minority students who debate is less encouraging. Minority student participation at nationals has increased on average 4.2%, ranging from 10.7% in 1991 to 14.4% in 1994 to 14.0% in 1997. Before we applaud the increased diversity at our national tournament it is important to be aware that the success rate of women and minorities lags behind. During the past seven years 70% or more of the students in the double octo's rounds have been white male. CEDA debate needs to change to become more inclusive.

Has the transformational approach of leadership made a difference in CEDA for the 1996-1997 year? A need for change was established, but the organization has continued to lose members. Executive Secretary, Greg Simerly, announced at the 1997 National CEDA Tournament Business Meeting that 226 schools were members this year. (Simerly, 1997) This number is discouraging since a significant increase was expected when CEDA and NDT debated a joint resolution. Many NDT schools joined CEDA but the number indicates that we continued to lose CEDA schools. The number of women and minorities debating at the National Championships increased, but the number of these under-represented groups in the elimination rounds has remained unchanged.

In brief, while a new direction was implemented with the creation of a vision statement and goals, one year is too short a time to measure and evaluate real change. Two major barriers to change in our organization are lack of time, and political coalitions. These stumbling blocks may prevent us from reaching our goals.

Because we all suffer from the aforementioned problems, most members of the CEDA community are sincerely interested in improving our organization. Unfortunately, tournament

preparation and participation, teaching and scholarship consumes most of our time and prevents us from working on our organization. In the past three years, officers and regional representatives have met during the summer, working on improving our organization. The summer 1997 meeting will include committee chairs and welcome all CEDA members to participate in planning a development conference for the year 1998. Although these meetings have been beneficial, regional representatives and committee chairs must cover their own expenses. Some members' schools cover their expenses, some personally pay for the trip, and a few who cannot do either, do not attend.

Since the lack of time is a barrier and the SCA and summer meeting expenses make it difficult for some members and most students to attend, allocating the time to work on our organization needs to become a priority for our activity. The structure and culture of CEDA debate need to change to include a yearly conference in place of one of our debate tournaments. The conference should begin as a regional conference mid year and the purpose should be to work on our organization. Replacing a debate tournament with a conference would give our students the opportunity to participate in the decision making of our organization and to practice leadership. It has been alarming to observe the elected student representatives struggling to lead a meeting. The conference would give all of us an opportunity to discuss new perspectives, and ways to work together to solve our most pressing problems. Yearly, regional problem solving conferences would help empower regional representatives to motivate our members to look beyond their own interests toward a vision that benefits us all.

Using a weekend to discuss and problem solve in regions instead of debating to win rounds and trophies at least once a year may help eliminate existing political coalitions (e.g., NDT versus CEDA, national circuit teams versus regional teams, and "old boy" networks that include mostly white males who band together based on their history of debate education and success as debaters). Working on our organization with colleagues and students across the nation during the past three years helped me break into the political coalitions and changed many of my preconceived notions and attitudes. More of us would increase our satisfaction with the CEDA experience from similar opportunities.

Is transformational leadership the best form of leadership for debate? According to leadership theorists (Burns 1978, Bass 1985, and Bass & Avolio, 1994) our other choices include laissez-faire leadership or transactional leadership. Laissez-faire leadership often means no leadership at all and transactional leadership focuses on how leaders exchange rewards for accomplished goals. (Northouse p.144.) Transactional leadership in CEDA would work to gain compliance from it's members through "contracts with the leader." A transactional leader is fixed on tradition and promises rewards or threats for those who help achieve desired goals. It is easiest to practice transactional leadership and we all practice this

form of leadership in our work and personal lives. Transformational leadership emphasizes a moral dimension by stressing the needs, values, and morals of the members of our debate community, and the relationship between the leader and the members. If transformational leadership is practiced in CEDA, members must be motivated to rise above their own self-interests for the good of their students and the CEDA organization.

As president of CEDA I learned that trying to transform CEDA is a very difficult and time consuming task. I encourage future leaders to continue trying as there is much community support. We have a long way to go but I am optimistic that achievement of our vision and goals will produce a better organization and form of debate unlike anything we have seen before. Our students are certainly worth it!

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BOOK REVIEWS

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Public Argument. By Robert O. Weiss. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1995. ISBN 0-8191-9900-1. 189 pages. \$23.50 paper.

By professing to focus on "reasoned communication which is directed toward real audiences under conditions of controversy to gain their assent on matters of general concern" (5), Weiss serves notice that *Public Argument* is not a typical competitive debate manual. Although many may object to the judgments implied through the use of terms like "real audiences" or "genuine communication" to distinguish public debate, Weiss is attempting to reach a very specific readership: those who view debate as a civic exercise whose worth is a product of its capacity to value, elevate and influence public opinion. The most likely audience for this book would consist of co-curricular programs, argumentation/ communication instructors, and civic groups that emphasize public deliberation. The text is not geared toward contemporary competitive tournament activities. Although Weiss notes that "in tournament competition it is possible, using some care, to find meets explicitly subscribing to an audience centered philosophy" (vii), his claim that decisions made as a product of public debate are less concerned with "which team did the better job of debating" (10) than with an audience's opinion with regard to the proposition as a result of the exchange implies that he sees such opportunities as the exception rather than the rule.

Spanning thirteen chapters, *Public Argument* falls into two main sections. The first five chapters establish a rationale for public argument, discussing the audiences, formats, and interaction styles and topics that typify public forum debate. The remaining chapters provide a more technical treatment of how one prepares to participate in public debating. This section takes the reader through a discussion of types of propositions, audience analysis, gathering and evaluating evidence, reasoning, communication, and decision making and concludes with advice on the building and maintenance of a public debate program.

It is customary for authors to open with homage to the place of argument in a democracy, but such concerns are often marginalized in chapters that focus heavily on strategies and tactics absent consideration of their philosophical underpinning. Not so for Weiss, whose initial treatment of "The Rationale for Public Debate" infuses the entire text. According to