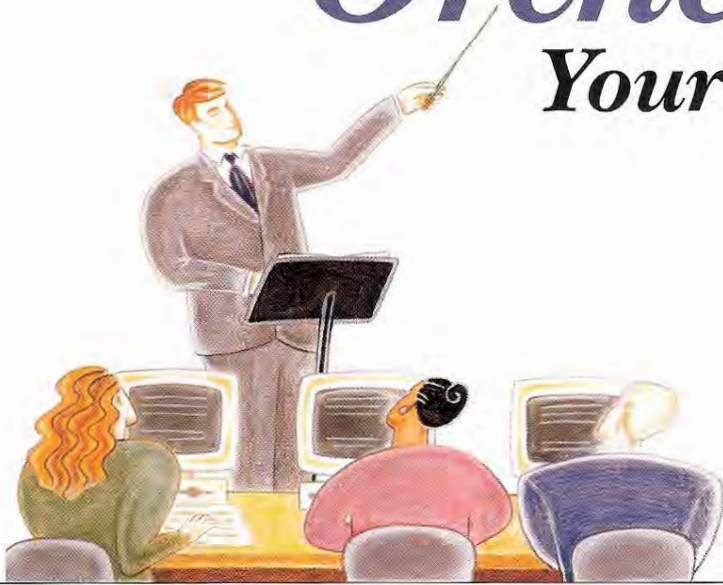


Orchestrating Your Leadership

by Craig Harrison



Recently I had the opportunity to lead an orchestra. It's an experience I recommend to all. Admittedly, I had my doubts. With no formal training I wondered:

- Would I lead correctly?
- Would others respond, and if so, how?
- Would I look foolish?

Follow My Lead

I did look foolish — but somewhat by design. My orchestra was a conference audience whom I was training to step into their own leadership. And follow my amusing lead each guest conductor did...magnificently. (Some joked I was an easy act to follow. My mission had been accomplished.)

Conductor Gets All Aboard

While a soundtrack played in the background I passed the baton to a random attendee and took the seat of my surprised successor, who then took a short stint as leader. Each subsequent conductor's seat was filled in turn by the previous conductor at their whim. And to my satisfaction the audience responded to each conductor. Their styles varied yet the audience caught on to each leader's style and direction. They clapped, vamped and even soloed.

During our debrief, it became clear we learned a great deal about leadership through this symphony ice-breaker:

- There is no one right or wrong style of leading — many styles and approaches abound,
- Leadership goals and gains may be dependent upon one's talent pool,
- Your leadership approach may be dependent upon the score, script or soundtrack you're expected to follow,
- Your leadership may be dependent upon the conductor you follow.

Each guest conductor remarked upon how different the view was from in front of the audience. Conducting felt differently than they imagined it while sitting down.

Upon returning to their seats after conducting, conductors also better appreciated the role, risk and responsibility of each who led that day.

Making Beautiful Music

The most effective conductors, and leaders, are the ones who elicit the best from each of their musicians: the strings, brass, percussion and woodwinds. The best leaders get their teams to meld their strengths together to make beautiful music. How well do you conduct the groups you lead? Do you connect with

the various temperments of your orchestra: the quiet ones, the soloists, the steady backbones of your team, etc.?

Unconscious Trumps Self-Conscious

Each "leader" agreed that they performed best when they let go of concerns about how they looked while leading. When their focus shifted to results and bringing out the best in others, everything else fell into place.

Each leader learned from those before and after them, and recognized that as the music changed, so too did the role of each leader.

When your time comes to lead, may you conduct your musicians as a conductor leads the symphony. Be brave and expressive and you'll hear the bravos and bravas of your devotees. ■

Craig Harrison helps professionals express their excellence through stellar sales and service training. Contact him at www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com, excellence@craigspeaks.com or call (888) 450-0664.

