

The Piedmont Triad region of North Carolina, home of CCL's global headquarters, is embarking on a high-stakes quest to transform its economy. Jobs in furniture, textiles, and tobacco, once the mainstays of the region's growth, are rapidly vanishing in Greensboro, High Point, and Winston-Salem.

Creating new jobs in growing sectors will require the region's cities to cooperate more closely than ever before. They'll need to set aside the old rivalries that have long defined their relationships. They will, for the first time, need to think and act

From the President



across municipal boundaries. So how can the region's leaders prepare themselves to work together without a blueprint? What key leadership skills must they develop to be successful?

Change first of all requires a real sense of urgency—and making that urgency apparent to your stakeholders. Beyond that, CCL's experience points to four critical skills for leading through change: collaboration, authenticity, communication, and initiative. These skills are essential not only for leaders in the Piedmont Triad but for any individuals attempting to lead organizations through transition.

Collaboration is the key starting point. Without it, territorial behavior and ineffective negotiations will almost certainly surface. Collaboration requires linking personal interests with the overriding interests of a larger group. It often means fundamentally shifting your mind-set.

Nelson Mandela set a remarkable standard for collaboration. After enduring nearly thirty years in prison, he must have been tempted to lash out at his enemies when he was finally released. Instead, he reached out to them as allies. Why? Because he kept his sights on his overriding goal: an integrated, prosperous South Africa.

Authenticity goes hand in hand with collaboration. It involves doing your job without compromising your values, beliefs, or personality. And that's not easy. We might want to maintain an executive image of being decisive and all-knowing. We sometimes don't want to hear the truth about ourselves from others. Abraham Lincoln led the United States through the most tumultuous period in its history. He did it by subverting his ego in favor of his mission. He was a man of great humility who staffed his presidential cabinet with people who had forcefully opposed him on the campaign trail. But he reached out to them because he believed it was best for the country. That is what authenticity is all about.

Communication is also critical. It means letting people in your organization or community see you and hear from you. It means listening carefully, especially when you don't immediately agree, and communicating your thoughts consistently and graciously. Here again is where urgency comes into play. There's a reason why A. G. Lafley, CEO of Procter & Gamble, made *U.S. News & World Report's* list of "America's Best Leaders." He makes listening in person to his employees and his customers a top priority.

There's one other key element in preparing yourself to lead through change: initiative. It's about taking action in innovative ways that tie collaboration, authenticity, and communication together to build momentum. One of my favorite books, *Confidence*, by Harvard Business School professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter, shows that initiative is an indispensable trait of businesses and sports teams that go on winning streaks. This book reminds us that leading change is a daunting challenge—but it's one we can rise to with the right preparation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John R. Ryan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

John R. Ryan, president and CEO, CCL

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