NCCO Webinars

Part 3

Series 1, Webinar 7 - 15 April 2020: Onward, We Lead

Retrieved on 11/10/2026 11:19:10 from https://ncco-usa.org/publications/ncco-webinars/issues/27/download

---

[53:10] What do you believe are intrinsic qualities for leaders, and has your philosophy changed by your work leading in this particular time?

Eileen: One leadership trait that I value is the willingness to accept responsibility at whatever level one is. Another trait I admire is the courage to make decisions. A third trait I value is the notion of distributed authority. Micromanagement is not sustainable these days. Trust those who are closer to the ground. The fourth trait pertains to our challenging budgetary environments, and my perspective as a middle manager: the importance of protecting our students and our fellow faculty from pressures from above.

Catherine: I strive to empower the staff. You have to trust your team. Organizations need to focus on their core. Why do they matter? What is their essence? For Chorus America, true north is serving and empowering singing ensembles to create vibrant communities and affect meaningful change. I'm focusing on taking advantage of this situation to do that in new ways. "The pessimist complains about the wind, the optimist expects it to change, and the leader adjusts the sails."

Karen: We're on an alert as leaders, to have an attentive listening ear and look for relevance. NATS is developing our first strategic plan, redoing our mission and values, and to see that come to life in the midst of this situation truly points to the depth of all those decisions we've made.

Tim: My north star has been, "If you don't like change, you're really not going to like irrelevance." This is a universal change that has hit us all, and I see this as a moment for incredible sharing of wisdom. What is our role as an organization? For ACDA it is inspiring excellence in performance, education, and advocacy.

[1:02:40] What is the impact of technology on your leadership and communication strategies? Are there specific communication strategies that you have found helpful in this time?

Karen: Communication technology has made all the difference. We have increased capacity for our NATS chats (it used to be 100, but we now have a much higher ability for people to engage in those conversations). It allows us to bring in other staff members for board meetings, and they are more directly hearing from the board members. Meetings are no longer limited by space, or by travel restrictions. Our membership is in Canada and in the US, and we are working to put together an international pedagogy conversation, which had not occurred to us to do until now. It will cost very little, and it could change the persona of pedagogy involvement, over the entire globe.

Catherine: Chorus America will be holding a virtual conference in June, which has a big learning curve. We've had our in-person conference for more than 40 years. I'm wondering why we didn't think of doing this before! We are combining platforms to support the primary values of the in-person conference, which are learning, connection, and celebrating the art form. We're putting together basic content delivery, but also ways of networking in "rooms" where ideas are shared, or one-on-one mentoring conversations. Opportunities for sponsors and exhibitors will be provided. And we'll be able to reach more people with information that will help them through this situation in October and beyond. That is a real silver lining. We

used to have regional meetings, and now we're doing a "listening tour" where we've pulled people together by type of chorus and budget size, and listened to their big challenges and concerns, and given opportunities for them to share ideas -- this if fueling our work on behalf of the field going forward.

**[1:08:10] In our pre-webinar chat, Eileen brought up the fact that many people don't have access to reliable internet. **

Eileen: We think about that in CMS. It is difficult for people to sing under duress. Our membership is thoughtful about how to help our students on a day-to-day basis.

Tim: Good news: we've all been forced to learn what synchronous sound can do online, and we're on a new page of possibilities with that. We've also learned what we can't do. I don't believe we can do choir at all online. As a choral conductor myself, I have been working with a technology company called "Match My Sound," and we've developed a program so that my chorus can learn their parts (right notes and rhythms), the software grades their efforts and sends me a report. This is a fantastic tool, and it raises my expectations for the individual members of my choir. But it doesn't make the music happen as an ensemble.