

Monthly Musings



Courtesy of Fletcher Consulting

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VOL. 7-1 • JANUARY 2015

SMART RESPONSE:

Know when to fold 'em

Hall of Fame rodeo announcer Bob Tallman knows how to deal with frigid weather. While we think of him as a genuine Texan (and he IS!), he grew up in Montana, where winter temps can reach chill factors of 40 below.

We were in Lubbock together on December 30 to announce the merger of our new client, AgTexas Farm Credit Services from Lubbock, with Great Plains Ag Credit from Amarillo. The new AgTexas Farm Credit has 14 total offices in the Lubbock, Amarillo and North Central Texas areas.

The plan was to hold a 9:30 a.m. news conference in Lubbock, which would be the home office of the newly merged entity, at the Bayer Museum of Agriculture.

Next, we would drive to Amarillo for a news conference that would announce a new regional office while still maintaining a major presence in that market.

The roads began to ice up a bit as we drove to the Bayer Museum at 8:15 a.m. By news conference time, TV stations were emailing to cancel their attendance because they were covering so many traffic accidents.

With one TV station, plus print and radio media present, we moved forward with the news conference. Upon its conclusion, we discussed the Amarillo news event. Bob recommended three considerations:

1. Always place the safety of your team and customers ahead of what is convenient for you.
2. If any employee or any member of your leadership team is injured, or worse, in an auto accident en route to this second event, you will severely damage the company, its morale and its momentum.
3. Determine what you can use from existing resources (video footage, photos and narrative from the first news conference) that will ensure the safety of your team.

The roads began to ice up a bit as we drove to...

Always place the safety of your team and customers ahead...

If any employee or member of your leadership team is injured or worse...

Without hesitation, new AgTexas CEO Tim McDonald agreed. While it seemed important to spread the word of the AgTexas-Great Plains merger, it was even more essential to remember that the people forming the team were more vital than any news event.



Where do you stand on valuing the safety of your team? Have you articulated how critical their safety is to your company's success and future?

Making that right call, even at a moment when the weather had a small chance of clearing up, helped the leadership team and employees of AgTexas Farm Credit realize there is indeed a priority in this company: its people.

Anyone can look good making decisions when things are going well, but it takes the exceptional leader to find the winning solution when facing adversity and challenges.

Mr. Rodeo Bob Tallman and the AgTexas leaders instinctively knew how to express that to their team. **How about you?**

SMART INNOVATION:

College Football Playoff

It's no secret that I disagree with which teams should have been in the College Football Playoff. Both TCU and Baylor had a lot of merit, and it's a shame there was not room for six teams.

Let's focus on the technology, specifically, a new feature called pylon cameras. You've seen the nerf orange markers at the corners of the end zones. This year, ESPN created a new video angle by placing cameras in the goal-line pylons, thus allowing additional angles for replays and television coverage.

Really brilliant idea, right?

Regardless of which teams you wanted to see in the championship game, you **HAVE** to love this clever sign that ruled the day — **Winner Plays TCU!**



By the way, if you want more information about the CFP, attend the **February 12 luncheon of the HEB Chamber of Commerce, where Mike Kelly, COO of the College Football Playoff, will be the featured speaker.** Make reservations at 817-283-1521.

SMART RESOLUTIONS:

Reasonable & achievable

Who hasn't made the bold January resolution to lose 20-40-60 pounds, give up smoking and start exercising?

According to some estimates, close to 80% of promises are broken within the first three weeks. So what is the answer?

Do simple, enjoyable, measurable activities that make you feel better without denying your favorite treats. Here are my three work resolutions for 2015:

1. Learn the names of people you think cannot help you, so the only benefit you receive is an appreciative smile. I know the name of my mailman at the office is David, the cashier at the parking garage of the Fort Worth Club is Otis, and that the best shoe shine guy in this part of the world is Tommy Gilliam. My goal is to learn the names of more people who absolutely, positively have no opportunity to help me in 2015. It's part of me becoming a better John Fletcher.



True story: One university professor asked this question that was worth 25% of the final exam: *What is the name of the person who cleans your dorm?* It's easy to know the big people, but I have seen some outrageously successful leaders know not just the names of their behind-the-

scenes employees, but also the names of those employees' children and the sports they play.

New car dealers Allen Samuels and Mac Churchill immediately come to mind for how they develop loyalty among their employees. Allen can tell stories about service technicians' children, and Mac Churchill celebrates dealership achievements with cook-outs, with him grilling

the steaks, serving them and expressing specific praises to his employees.

2. Smile at least once a day. This message is a gift from JPS CEO Robert Earley, whose three rules are: Own any situation you're involved in; seek joy; and don't be a jerk. My favorite of these is "Seek joy." I am focusing my efforts on surrounding myself with vendors, clients and associates on my team who are joyful by nature and want to spread that onto those around them. I find that I work harder for those clients who respect me and appreciate my efforts, and I am equally committed to expressing my appreciation to those team members, vendors and clients that share my vision.

3. Become the MVP on each client's team.

Clients have the opportunity to either reward me with more business opportunities or to replace me. In that sense, I build upon or tear down my reputation and our relationship with every interaction. My goal is for each client, at year-end, to say, "The most valuable partner that we have had this past year has been John Fletcher... AGAIN!"

To quote my good friend Rex Houze, goals must be in your face, attainable, measurable and cause stretch.

I will succeed on my goals because each of these is something that I love to do. I just need to do more of each of them!

Now, aside from the weight loss and running 75 miles a week, what are your reasonable resolutions for 2015?

THE Tiebreaker

The Pronoun Test

Robert B. Reich is a former U.S. Secretary of Labor, and he knows how to select winning organizations, simply by employing the Pronoun Test.

"I ask frontline workers a few general questions about the company. If the answers I get back describe the company in terms like *they* and *them*, then I know it's one kind of a company. If the answers are put in terms like *we* or *us*, I know it's a different kind of company."

US VS. THEM

Spend a little time with your frontline employees. If they respond in terms of *we* and *us*, then you have a team. Otherwise, you may just have employees.

