

# Our Future Leaders: An Introduction to Leadership and Management in APPA

By Matt Adams

While some take it for granted, APPA is a rich source of continuing education for its members. In fact, an APPA member can continue to participate in continued education throughout their facilities management (FM) career. The material spans the spectrum, but is most likely associated with technical and FM-related topics associated with our industry. However, APPA offers much more than this. APPA U, for instance, includes both the APPA Institute for Facilities Management and the Leadership Academy.

## A CLOSER LOOK AT THE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The popularity of the Leadership Academy is growing each year, demonstrating the desire for nontechnical education within our ranks. Currently, it comprises four levels:

- Level I: Individual Effectiveness
- Level II: Interpersonal Effectiveness
- Level III: Managerial Effectiveness
- Level IV: Organizational Effectiveness

These classes provide the full range of training for our up-and-coming leaders. They also provide a sounding board for the opportunities and challenges facing our leaders today.

The Leadership Academy is a microcosm of the real world of leadership in the FM industry. This not only benefits a members' educational experience, but provides useful insight into the current business environment. As the head of faculty for Level III, I see that our classes include a mix of technical and managerial backgrounds. The typical class consists of approximately a 1:2 ratio, with some participants having experience in industries not associated with APPA; these include hospitality, contracted services

(outsourced FM services), and often the construction industry. The remaining students have been in the FM industry for most of their careers and are moving up the management ladder.

I find this initial statistic useful. Much is said about the lack of competitive pay within our industry, but there is obviously something intrinsically attractive about the industry, otherwise 50 percent of our leadership students would not be part of FM's essentially life-long career path. At least 50 percent of our future leadership likes this industry enough to become further indoctrinated and specialized in it, so they can succeed and stay put! This fact is consistent with most surveys related to job satisfaction (the pay scale of any job is typically ranked at number 4 or 5 on a 10-point scale, with more satisfying aspects ranking higher).

While the desirability of sticking with a career in educational FM is attractive to many, the skills needed to move from technical positions into management are rarely provided by APPA member institutions. Unless a participant had worked for a traditional large corporation prior to joining our industry, there is little chance he/she received formal education in leadership skills. In fact, virtually none of our peer educational institutions provide leadership training to their FM employees. It's all on-the-job training for our colleagues, unless they come from another industry. While this further strengthens the case for APPA training, it clearly indicates that our rising colleagues will likely have farther to go in their training than many of their corporate counterparts.

There is irony in the fact that some of the missing training and skills needed by our rising APPA colleagues are provided in business schools and other departments on their respective campuses. In general, many APPA U students could benefit

from training in institutional accounting (GASB 34), fundamental cost accounting, modern information and systems technology, organizational design, and planning and control. But most important of all is the need for every rising APPA leader to learn business communications skills—to this day, I still say it is one of the most important classes I took in school.

Nevertheless, many of our peers reach management positions without knowledge of these basic management functions, and it slows their growth in the institutional business environment. Hopefully, our APPA members will soon arrange for these classes to be readily available at the business schools on their campuses, in order to help their rising FM stars.

### BEYOND A SIMPLE PAYCHECK

On the other hand, the nature of the institutional FM profession is such that just by virtue of participation, it develops unique skills in individuals that they would not gain in other industries. While many industries have a simple set of “carrot-and-stick” management tools at their disposal, this is not true in FM. In fact, we cannot give out large pay raises, stock options, cars, or fancy vacations as rewards for great performance. Furthermore, we do not fire people at-will, demote them on a whim, or abandon them when they suffer personal setbacks.

Some will say this is a weakness of FM, while others will say it is one of the many attributes that makes our industry so attractive—something that goes beyond a simple paycheck. This lack of brute force as a tool compels our leaders to become more sophisticated and creative. It means, we must address the “whole-person paradigm,” as the late Stephen Covey coined the term. Our homegrown leaders are well versed in recognizing their employees as people, and not as though they were expendable equipment.

FM staff are motivated by a job well done, recognition of the same, and knowledge that there is stability in their work. These less tangible rewards are more subtle to recognize and foster. The new leaders in FM have risen with the whole-person mentality always in place, which has demanded of them a skill set that incorporates the next generation of management theory. Many of our peers from other industries have little or no

experience with this more mature and ethical leadership approach—however, our APPA colleagues have learned it from day one!

Something else to keep in mind is that the new leaders of the FM industry are very pragmatic. Four out of five have experienced at least one significant budget reduction during their career. They have come to understand that a fundamental tenet of educational FM is “do more with less.” Despite this, they succeed and do exactly that. At least half will remain with their institution for their entire career, and some will encourage their children to work for the same institution—and many will do just that.

As we like to say in the Level III class: Nobody started a career in higher education FM to get rich quickly. With that acknowledgment, our new leaders can move on to more profound issues that directly impact the satisfaction that they, and their direct reports, find daily in their work. (💰)

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