The Value of Keeping a Leadership Journal

Reflective writing “fires-up” critical thinking – There have been various studies showing reflective writing as a learning method, which promotes critical thinking skills.

Promotes deeper exploration of ideas – I use journaling as an opportunity to ask myself questions to probe deeper into my thoughts and ideas on leadership. (e.g., *Why is this important? Who are others who have done this before me? What did they do differently? What is another way to think about this? etc.)*

Facilitates “complete” thinking – writing down thoughts into words, forces me to think through and process my thoughts fully. When I write, I have the ability to go back, re-read, re-process, add, delete, modify or just take the time to think more about what’s been written. By writing down my ideas, I have the benefit of capturing my initial thoughts on paper, along with the benefit of taking time to think about what I’ve recorded in order to fully complete my thoughts.

Writing gives “ownership” to thoughts – Reflective writing solidifies my understanding of my beliefs on the topics I’m writing about. I internalize my thoughts to be my “own,” which in turn becomes my experience.

A chronicle of ideas – A journal is the ultimate repository of thoughts and ideas. These thoughts can be put into action now, or put on the “back stove” to simmer until another day.

Final Thoughts

1. I have to admit, when I first thought about keeping a leadership journal, I was a bit embarrassed. I had visions of a “dear diary” entry sharing my inner feelings on “foofy” leadership hocus-pocus. I also held the belief; I had to do an entry every day. Finally, I felt my journal had to be filled with well written thoughts (i.e. good handwriting, no typos, etc.).

2. The truth is I use my leadership journal as a notebook of ideas, questions, thoughts, goals, etc. It’s somewhere in the middle of a classroom notebook and whiteboard of random ideas. Sometimes I capture my thoughts multiple times a day. Sometimes I don’t have any updates for a few days. My writing resembles chicken-scratch (*mom said I should have been a doctor with my handwriting*), and I often cross things out and have arrows pulling different thoughts together. It’s not pretty, but it works for me.

3. I started my leadership journal a few months ago. In the short time I’ve been capturing my thoughts, I’ve already found I’m learning and retaining more information in these areas. And while I may not be the perfect manager, I’ve built better awareness of my philosophies and thoughts, as well as a nice collection of best practices on areas I’ve researched along the way.

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