

Teaching Young Dogs Old Tricks!

Management and Spiritual Lessons From America's Most Selective School — Clown College

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ABSTRACT: Our success in integrating faith and learning for a postmodern generation lies not in learning new tricks but using old evangelistic practices we learned when we first came to Christ. By doing so, we are teaching young dogs (our students) old tricks. The focus of this paper is on how one of the authors uses top 10 lists to tell his personal story to communicate business and spiritual principles. It begins with a discussion of top 10 lists and how they can be used effectively in a classroom. The main portion of the paper presents “Top 10 Lessons from America’s Most Selective College,” which communicates 10 important business and spiritual truths learned at Clown College. The final portion of the paper discusses how others might use personal stories to integrate faith and learning in the business classroom.

INTRODUCTION

Among the pressures that business faculty in higher education often face is that of keeping up to date in their field (Ylijoki, 2003) while carrying large teaching and advising loads (and sometimes research, too). Faculty in larger schools often have the opportunity to focus on one academic discipline (e.g., human resource management, international business, operations management) and this makes keeping up to date easier. However, in smaller schools faculty tend to become generalists, making it far more difficult to keep abreast of new thinking in multiple fields of study (Marek, 2003).

Course-delivery methods are also shifting significantly (Gumport, 2000). The move from chalk and talk to e-learning using iPhone technology has been rapid (Grissom, 2008). Academics have to teach virtually as well as traditionally. For many older academics, this is not an easy transition (Rousseau & Rogers, 1998), and some might easily insist that you “cannot teach old dogs new

tricks.”

Disseminating up-to-date knowledge is only part of the academician’s role. Another vital role is helping students in their own personal and professional development (Bourner, 1996). Even here there are growing challenges. Many academicians grew up within a modernist paradigm (Bloland, 1995), while students are influenced by post-modernist worldviews (Pinar, 2003; Slattery, 1995). What was shocking during the punk era of the 1970’s is now commonplace. Students frequently have tattoos, multiple piercings (Tate & Shelton, 2008), bright pink (or green or blue) hair, wear pajamas to class, and text and twitter all day (Young, 2008). More disturbingly, students simply think differently about education, career, relationships Christ and the church (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007). The Kinnaman and Lyons 2007 book *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity...and Why it Matters* reveals that the form of Christianity we have grown up with repulses many of today’s young people we are trying to disciple in our classrooms.

Christian business faculty are facing some distinct challenges. It can seem like a losing battle to remain current in their academic fields, keep up-to-date with changing pedagogic technology, and attempt to bridge the gap between modernist and postmodern paradigms.

Thankfully, the postmodern and post-Christian paradigms shared by many students provide motifs that we can use to connect with the student body — our personal story. While meta-narratives were accepted and personal stories distrusted in modernist arenas, the reverse appears to be the case in postmodern and post-Christian cultures. Students are much more likely to reject our theological narrative of redemption and to warmly respond to our personal stories (Bosch, 1991; McAdams, 2001). The irony is that our success in integrating faith and learning to a postmodern generation lies not in new tricks but in the old evangelistic practices of telling authentic testimonies! By doing so, we are teaching the new dogs (our students) old tricks.

This paper is born out of our attempts to tell personal stories in the classroom. At Greenville College, a visiting speaker program called Professional Business Leaders brings Christian business leaders to the campus to tell their story in the classroom. The story begins with their life in college and covers their career progression with a particular focus on integrating faith in the workplace. We have heard the personal stories of an oil explorer, board members of A.G. Edwards and Edward Jones, a former CEO of Purina, a senior executive from Zondervan Publishing, an international bestselling author, music industry executives, Snoop Dog's music attorney, executive coaches, officers from S&P 100 companies, top baseball executives, HR directors, and so on. Many of these speakers have become mentors to our students in the business field and in their spiritual lives.

We also tell our own stories. The focus of this paper is on how one of the authors has developed Kent Saunders' idea of using top 10 lists to tell his personal story in such a way that it can be used to communicate business and spiritual principles. The remainder of the paper is organized into three parts. The first part introduces Saunders' notion of top 10 lists. It goes on to show how one of the authors has adapted this technique to be used every Friday in an Accounting I class. Part one finishes by describing how this author has also developed the top 10 approach to tell his Clown College story and focus on the lessons he learned from Clown College. Part two presents "Top 10 Lessons from America's Most Selective College" to communicate business and spiritual truths to our students. The author has identified 10 important lessons learned at Clown College that have both business and spiritual implications.

Part three offers some concluding comments focusing on ways to use personal stories to integrate faith and learning in the business classroom.

TOP 10 LISTS

Kent Saunders introduced the idea of beginning classes with top 10 lists in the 2006 Christian Business Faculty Association conference at Cedarville University (Saunders, 2006b). His paper was subsequently published in a peer-reviewed journal (Saunders, 2006a). Having tried a number of techniques to stimulate class discussion, Saunders drew inspiration from Becker's work on top 10 lists used in finance classes (Becker, 1993) and the top 10 lists used by David Letterman on the *Late Show* to develop his own top 10 lists, such as top 10 titles for Christ and top 10 Proverbs.

Saunders' presentation at the CBFA conference made a significant impact on one of the authors of this paper. On returning from the Cedarville conference, he began using top 10 lists each Friday in his Accounting 1 class. Some of the lists had no purpose other than to entertain: "Top 10 Reasons to attend Greenville College" (# 10 — Because the food in the dining commons is so good). Some are humorous, but with a lesson: "Top 10 Reasons to Get Married by the Time you Graduate from College" (# 7 — Because all your friends are doing it). Other lists are more serious: "Top 10 Names of God the Father," "Top 10 Names of Christ," "Top 10 Names of the Holy Spirit," "Top 10 Names of Satan." On the end-of-the-semester evaluations, students often say these Top Ten lists are the best part of the course.

Having been asked to speak to the professional business leaders class, this author developed a more extensive top 10 list through which to tell his story: "Top Ten Lessons from America's Most Selective College — Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey's Clown College." Through this list, he made important business and spiritual points to the class. Students enjoyed not only the presentation but also remembered the teaching points.

TOP TEN LESSONS FROM AMERICA'S MOST SELECTIVE COLLEGE — CLOWN COLLEGE

Lesson #1 — We Stand on the Shoulders of Giants

Circus application: There have been many famous clowns, and at Clown College students were taught to appreciate the work of those who went ahead. In the

mid to late 1900s, Lou Jacobs was one of the giants of clowning. In *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, the third Indiana Jones movie, the movie begins with young Indiana Jones in 1912. Both Indiana Jones and the “bad guys” who are chasing him leap onto a moving train. Steven Spielberg, the director, wanted people to know this was a circus train, so the train car has a picture of Lou Jacobs painted on the side of it. Historically, this is not accurate. Lou Jacobs did not start performing as a clown until 1925, 13 years after the setting of this scene. But Spielberg felt the best was to say “Circus” was to have a picture of Lou Jacobs.

Business application: It is important to recognize and know the work of those who have gone before us. We follow pathbreakers. In academe, if our field is management, we should be familiar with the contributions of Frederick Taylor and Peter Drucker. In strategy, we should know the work of Igor Ansoff and Michael Porter and encourage our students to read biographies of Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford, Mary Parker Follett, Lee Iacocca, and Jack Welch.

Spiritual application: In the late 1300s, John Wycliffe sacrificed his life to promote the translation of the Bible. More recently, Jim Eliot sacrificed his life in order to share the saving love of Christ, and Brother Andrew risked much to smuggle the Bible into communist nations. These are international giants most of us recognize. However, we all have personal giants who have deeply inspired us. The College Faith series, in which Christian leaders and educators share stories from their student days, frequently mentions these personal giants. (See Filby, 2006). Our life as Christians cannot be understood apart from the great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1) who have gone before us, the encouragement of those race alongside us, and the grace of God who has poured love upon us.

Lesson #2 – Appearances Are Important

Circus application: All circus performers put a lot of time and effort into their costumes and make-up, but this is especially true for clowns. Clowns care tremendously how they look. It usually takes a clown thirty minutes to an hour to apply make-up and get dressed. Most clowns make their own costumes, and hours of work go into designing clothes, finding the right fabrics, and sewing. Clowns also spend hours selecting the right make-up. A new clown will try scores of faces before selecting one that seems most appropriate. Make-up must be applied evenly; edges of make-up and outlines of features must be even and straight. Clowns know that appearances matter.

Business application: Do business students need to learn that appearances are important? Absolutely. Our

students are used to a casual lifestyle and coming to their “work,” that is, the classroom, looking like they just rolled out of bed, which may actually be the case. Dress codes are often unwritten, and students need to learn to watch for clues to these unwritten dress codes. Corporate dress codes may not be as rigid today as they were 20 or 30 years ago, but students need to understand that it is important to discern and adopt acceptable dress.

Spiritual application: As Christians, how we present ourselves to others is important. Just as our students will be watched by others in the workplace, all Christians need to be reminded that we will be watched by others. Both behavior and physical appearance are important. If we have an ichthys decal on our car’s bumper and then cut off another driver, someone is sure to notice. I Timothy 2:9-10 admonishes us to dress modestly. Those with whom we spend the most time — co-workers, spouses, and children — are most apt to see us when we are not living as we should. The way we live our day-to-day life can do a lot to attract these people to Christ or push them away from Christ.

Lesson #3 – Wages, for the Most Part, Are Set by Supply and Demand

Circus application: In a circus, clowns work much harder than showgirls, yet showgirls are paid twice what clowns earn. Sixty students graduated each year from Clown College. Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus hired only 30 clowns a year. The supply of clowns definitely exceeded demand, resulting in low wages. Now think about showgirls. Almost any woman who wants to be a showgirl wants to work either on Broadway or in Las Vegas. Most do not have a strong desire to travel with the circus. There is a very limited supply. To induce young women to travel with the circus, Ringling Bros. has to pay higher wages to showgirls.

Business application: Does supply and demand affect wages outside the circus? Of course. Why do surgeons tend to earn so much money? To be a good surgeon requires great skill, years of education, and extensive practice. A lot of us can’t do that kind of work. High demand and low supply leads to high wages. If our students are even mildly interested in making some money, and most of them are if for no other reason than to pay off their student loans, then they better not consider a position as retail check-out clerk. This is not a put-down of retail checkers. Simply put, because there are not a lot of skills required to enter that line of work, there are a lot of people willing to take those positions. High supply relative to the demand results in low wages.

Spiritual application: Is there a spiritual application for the law of supply and demand? We think so. However,

in a spiritual realm we think not about material rewards but spiritual rewards. The demand for laborers is great while the supply of laborers is small. In Luke 10:2, Jesus tells his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” As we are faithful in following Christ and doing his will, Christ promises to supply our material needs. (See, for example, Matthew 6:33.) But these material items are not our true reward; our reward is much greater. As Paul nears the end of his life, he says, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Redeemed by Jesus and having served him with our talents, we can look forward to eternity with God.

Lesson #4 – It is Important to Have Contingency Plans.

Circus application: To facilitate quick costume changes, clown pants tend to be baggy. Therefore, while performing it is quite possible a clown may lose his or her pants. As with regular pants, most clown pants have a zipper. But at the top of the zipper is a snap. If both the zipper and the snap fail, there are two hooks and eyes to hold the pants together. There are also suspenders. The suspenders are for looks, but they also serve the very important purpose of helping clowns’ pants stay on. What happens if the zipper, the snap, the hooks and eyes, and the suspenders all fail, *and* the pants fall off? Under their clown pants clowns wear regular shorts or cut-offs. While a clown does not want to be caught in center ring wearing a pair of shorts, that is certainly better than being in center ring in underwear.

Business application: One author worked at General Electric’s corporate headquarters in 1981 when Jack Welch took over as chief executive officer. That was long before PowerPoint. Back then presentations were made with slides loaded into a carousel. When people made a presentation to GE’s Board, they had two projectors loaded with identical slides. The two projectors moved in tandem but only one was on. If that bulb burned out, the other projector could immediately be turned on and be at the correct spot in the presentation. It was said at GE’s headquarters that the first time Jack Welch made a presentation to the board, he came not with two slide projectors but *three*. If true, such attention to detail and contingency planning may have something to do with why he was selected as chief executive officer.

Spiritual application: One of the authors had the

privilege of conducting leadership training in an underground church in an oriental country. During one of his visits, the location for the class was selected primarily because it had several escape routes, an important practical consideration should the meeting be raided by local authorities. One of the senior leaders overseeing several hundred churches used seven aliases to protect his identity and avoid possible imprisonment, torture, or death. Jesus informed his disciples that he was sending them out as sheep among wolves and instructed them to be “shrewd as snakes and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). Developing contingency plans is part of having the shrewdness of snakes.

Lesson #5 – Anyone Can Master the Basics

Circus application: Consider juggling. Many people assume it is a skill they could never achieve. With proper instruction and sufficient practice, juggling is not at all difficult. A classic juggling book, unfortunately now out of print, is *The Juggling Book* by Carlo (1974). Carlo believed that anyone could learn to juggle with good instruction and lots of practice. In juggling, the first thing a person learns is a basic three-ball cascade. Carlo breaks this basic routine into six steps, and students practice each step until they are proficient with that step. Only then should they move on to the next step. Break a complex task down into small pieces. Master each small piece. By doing this, almost anyone can learn to juggle.

Business application: Some students have a fear of certain subjects, especially of the more quantitative courses. We need to encourage them to apply themselves and work at mastering the material. If we provide good instruction and they do their part, they are bound to succeed. We should encourage students not to be afraid to try something. Even with adequate training and practice, people cannot master everything. Most of our students, and especially we faculty, will never be able to walk a high wire or swing on a trapeze. But often there are a lot more things we can do than we realize.

Spiritual application: What are the most basic elements of Christianity? The tract commonly known as *The Four Spiritual Laws*, published by Campus Crusade for Christ (Bright, 2007), presents the most important tenants of Christianity:

1. God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.
2. Humans are sinful and separated from God.
Therefore, we cannot know and experience God’s love and plan for our lives.
3. Jesus Christ is God’s only provision for sin. Through

Christ, we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives.

4. We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord to know and experience God's love and plan for our lives.

These are the basics. The good news is we can easily "master the basics." Once we understand and grasp these basics, we can repeat the sinners' prayer with sincerity and receive new life in Christ.

Lesson #6 – To Get Good at Something Usually Requires Hard Work

Circus application: Stilt-walking is not difficult; it just requires lots of practice. Start with stilts that are a foot high. Master the basics. Walk and walk on stilts until it is second nature. Then make stilts a foot taller and practice some more. Continue lengthening the stilts as long as you are comfortable. Professional stilts do not extend above the knee. They are simply long rods with platforms to place over the shoes. Straps are used to hold the stilts snug on the stilt-walker's feet and lower legs. While this allows the stilt-walker to wear pants covering the legs and stilts, it also means the stilt-walker falls down with the stilts. This adds a degree of excitement to professional stilt-walking and emphasizes the need to perfect the technique.

Business application: Students need to know that school is not particularly easy. We need to apply ourselves and work hard if we want to do well in school. Studies indicate that most students today will not only change jobs but also careers. If students want to make a mid-life switch in careers, that is great, but they will have to work hard to gain expertise needed in their new field.

Spiritual application: While realizing the need for Christ may be a difficult process, the actual process of becoming a Christian is simple. It requires repentance and prayer. But to be a mature Christian requires hard work. In fact, it requires a life time of study and practice. In II Timothy 2:15 Paul admonishes, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." There is a tension. God promises that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light (Matthew 11:30). But that does not let us off the hook. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord" (Colossians 3:23). To be fully mature Christians, we need to constantly study God's Word and seeking his will in prayer.

Lesson #7 – We All Have Different Strengths and Abilities

Circus application: In a circus, virtually all of the

animals — elephants, lions, tigers, camels, horses, monkeys, bears, dogs — are female. Why? Female animals are more cooperative, easier to get along with, less apt to fight among themselves. Males are too stubborn and bull-headed. "Bull" literally refers to a male animal. To say that an animal is bull-headed literally means a male who is stubborn. Male. Stubborn. In the context of the animal world, that is simply redundant. (Of course, the authors are careful not to draw any parallels to humans!)

Business application: We believe a manager should recognize that employees have different strengths and work with people accordingly. This leads to two outcomes: a team that is more effective and team members who derive greater satisfaction from their jobs. People are different. Yes, females and males are different, but it is important for us to consider differences not just in terms of gender. Females are not all alike; males are not all alike. Different people have different abilities.

Spiritual application: The spiritual application for this is obvious. We have different spiritual gifts. It is important to discern what our gifts are and to exercise them. See both I Corinthians 12:12-31 and Romans 12:4-8. The Bible affirms what is clear by observation — we are different from each other and we have different talents. Let's rejoice in our differences. The body of Christ is better off when we each practice our gifts.

Life Lesson #8 – Pursue Your Dreams; Have Long-Term Plans

Circus application: During high school, one author of this article attended Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Back stage he talked with some of the clowns in Clown Alley. One clown gave him a Clown College application and encouraged him to fill it out. The author finished high school, graduated from college, taught himself juggling, stilt-walking, and unicycling, and worked for General Electric for two years. But he never forgot his dream. Seven years after being encouraged to apply to Clown College, he traveled 150 miles to New York City and walked down the streets of Manhattan to a Clown College audition at Madison Square Garden, balancing a pair of homemade stilts under one arm and a bag of juggling balls, rings, and clubs under his other arm. That is passion and long-term planning.

Business application: Many of our students, especially our seniors, have benefited from written five-year plans. While this should certainly include career aspirations, it should be much broader. What would they like to accomplish in the next five years? Although we cannot make them do this, we encourage them to take out the plan a year later,

reflect on what they have written, and write a new five year plan. Too often we get caught up in the “tyranny of the urgent” and let other pressing matters take precedence over what is important. As professors, what are our long-term goals, and are we doing what we need to achieve those goals?

Spiritual application: We need to make sure we focus on our spiritual goals as well, not just what is urgent. InterVarsity Press has a small booklet *Tyranny of the Urgent* (Hummel, 1974), which encourages us to keep focused on important matters in our lives. The booklet points out that if we get so caught up constantly attending urgent matters, we will neglect what is important. With our spiritual goals, this is simply something we cannot afford to do. We must keep a focus on long-term goals and objectives and make sure we are making progress toward these goals. If we do this, we may find ourselves going on a short-term mission trip, providing service in retirement, or taking our family to work at a soup kitchen or on a much needed holiday.

Lesson #9 – Give Credit Where Credit Is Due

Circus application: While clowns must develop original material and come up with new skits, they often draw on those who have come before. Everything they do cannot be original, and clowns should never forget to give credit where credit is due. Clowns should also thank those who have been instrumental in keeping the profession of clowning alive. Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey clowns owe a huge debt to Irvin Feld. Mr. Feld bought Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus from John Ringling North in 1967. When Mr. Feld went through Clown Alley, he found only 14 clowns, with an average age of 58. Mr. Feld knew the truth of the quote attributed to P. T. Barnum: “Clowns are the pegs upon which the circus hangs.” Mr. Feld started Clown College the following year.

Business application: Our business students could learn these same lessons. Be original when you can and when you should, but do not be afraid to build on the work of others. Just make sure you give appropriate credit to those on whom you rely. Thank and acknowledge those who contributed to you and your work. Thank your boss, your mentor, your co-workers, your spouse.

Spiritual application: As children of God, we must always remember to give thanks to our Creator and Sustainer. Without God, all efforts are futile. “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalm 127:1). The history of the people of Israel is a history in which God blesses his people time and time again only to see his people forget him as they enjoy the very blessings he gives (See Deuteronomy 6:10-12). Christian business students will do well to remember that it is God who gives

us the ability to make wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18), and it is important for us to give credit to the Lord, for that is where credit is truly due.

Lesson #10 – What Unites Us is Greater than What Divides Us

Circus application: A circus often has little people, and many years clown college classes have included one or more little people. Initially, most of the other students think of the little person as, for example, “Alyssa, the dwarf,” but quickly she becomes just Alyssa. The fact the person is small is irrelevant. There are a few times her size is relevant. For example, she struggles with elephant riding; her legs are simply not long enough to wrap around the elephant’s neck. But most times her size is not important. She is not Alyssa the dwarf; she is simply Alyssa.

Business application: Eventually many of our students will move into supervisory and managerial positions. We should remind them that those they oversee will often have the same ambitions, drive, desire for recognition, and even insecurities and worries that they have. In workplace interactions, the Golden Rule is important. Why treat others as you want to be treated? Because in our core, we are so much alike. Maslow, with his classic hierarchy of needs, suggests we all have the same types of needs (Maslow, 1943). Most of us in the United States have met our most basic needs for adequate food and shelter and are trying to satisfy higher-level needs. Some of us are trying to satisfy intermediate-level needs, while some are trying to satisfy higher-order needs. But according to Maslow, we all have the same hierarchy of needs we wish to satisfy.

Spiritual application: We differ theologically, but what we have in common is usually more important than what separates us. We are Calvinists, Wesleyans, Baptists, Pentecostals, Protestant, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox; pre-millennial, post-millennial, and a-millennial. While the theological differences between Christians are significant, we should not lose sight of the faith which unites us. Jesus prays for all believers to be one (John 17:21). Paul reiterates the need for unity in his letter to the Ephesians: “There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to one hope when you were called — one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:4-6). Our theological differences may be significant, but as Christians we share something wonderful — the belief in the efficacy of the atoning work of Jesus on the cross on our behalf.

TOP 10 TIPS FOR INCORPORATING PERSONAL TESTIMONY IN THE BUSINESS CLASSROOM

While we recognize that this author's story is unique, we firmly believe that there are many personal career testimonies that will be of benefit in the business classroom. As illustrated in one of the author's Clown College account, a story can be used to communicate both business and spiritual principles. Over the past four years, we have heard the career stories of some 40 business leaders in our professional business leaders class. As we have reflected on how to leverage these career stories to effectively communicate business principles and integrate faith, we have generated another top 10 list of tips we hope will be helpful to others interested in using career stories in this way.

Tip #10: The story needs to be authentic

Today's postmodern generation hungers for authenticity. In our briefing of speakers, we stress the need for authenticity. As long as the story is real and honest, the students warm to the speaker. However, if they sense there is anything spurious or phony, they close their ears, minds, and hearts.

Tip #9: The story needs to be jargon free

The postmodern, post-Christian generation is distrustful of the jargon that evangelical Christians use with little reflection. Evangelical jargon words like "saved" mean little in a postmodern, post-Christian culture. In our briefing of speakers we try to help the speaker "know" his or her audience and some of the areas of sensitivity that they might have. Obviously, it is too much to expect a speaker to change his or her vocabulary to address a particular group of students. But, we have noticed that the more that the speaker can incorporate postmodern motifs that resonate with the students (such as journey and struggle) rather than evangelical buzzwords they have heard many times before, the more the students are likely to listen and think about the content of the message.

Tip #8: The story must be integrative

Business students want to hear business speakers not preachers in the classroom. The speakers who have emphasized their business careers and integrated their faith into the stories have been received far more readily than those who have used the opportunity to preach. Our experience has been that students readily warm to speakers who integrate their faith in a genuine way, showing how their faith guided them in difficult personal or business situations. Equally, the students have responded less warmly to speakers who use the

time telling the students how they should live their lives.

Tip #7: The speaker needs to be vulnerable

For many students, authenticity is about sharing the struggles and complexities of life just as much as reflecting on the victories. As a result, we encourage our visiting speakers to not only share the high points of their careers but also reflect upon the complexity of managing today. Students respond better to speakers who acknowledge the struggle of integrating faith at work than speakers who appear to have it all together. However, to talk about struggle requires a degree of vulnerability and transparency that is just as alien to corporate America as it is in many of our churches. So much so that some speakers find the whole experience cathartic. In telling their career stories to students, they often discover God's active hand. At times visiting speakers weep in front of the class as they catch a new glimpse of how the grace of God is at work in their lives.

Tip #6: The story needs to be substantive

While students certainly want to hear from speakers who tell their career stories in authentic and vulnerable ways, they also want to hear from leaders and managers who have accomplished substantial achievements. Students are often looking for role models and mentors to coach them as they pursue their life and career journeys. While it is occasionally helpful to have recent graduates speak to discuss success strategies for the first few years after graduation, students by far prefer speakers who possess extensive business acumen.

Tip #5: The story must be passionate

Postmodern students often connect at an emotional level before they are prepared to intelligently evaluate the content of the speaker's story. Speakers who can convey the drama and emotion of their personal career experiences connect better with today's students.

Tip #4: Stories must help achieve course-learning goals and objectives

Career stories are more beneficial when they help achieve learning objectives. For example, at Greenville College there are a number of learning goals and objectives we consider of primary importance in a business education. These include teamwork, communication skills, the ability to use resources wisely, the ability to accomplish tasks, and so forth. The more we have linked the speaker's story to learning goals of the management department, the more students have seen the relevance of the speaker's comments.

Tip #3: The use of stories must be built into the assessment plan

Students listen more attentively when they have to produce an assessed output. Typically, we ask students to identify what they consider to be the five most important points made by the speaker, select one of them and integrate the speaker's comments with recent research or news. This encourages students to pay attention, reflect, and keep current with business news and research.

Tip #2: Expect the students to dress professionally to honor the speaker

We have established a dress code in our Professional Business Leaders class. Students must dress in professional business attire for the class. The speakers appreciate the gesture and students begin to think and act like professionals. In addition, each week we invite two of the top students to dine with the visiting speaker prior to the class. This is a reward for the consistent good work of the better students. The meal also helps the speaker get a feel for the class and is part of the briefing.

Tip #1: The speaker must not be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ

We have already noted that the speaker is better received if the message focuses on business topics and illustrates the integration of faith in their daily work life. Students, whether Christian or otherwise, appreciate speakers who know what they believe and can articulate the reasons for their belief. While we encourage speakers not to preach during our briefing, we also tell them that we want to hear how Christ has been at work in their career.

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