

### **The Tortuga Dilemma**

The Death of the President at Tortuga State is full of speculation and opinions but the facts are evident. Tortuga State College is a community college in a town in Arizona where the population is stagnant. The President of the school has been found dead. The event is gaining media attention and is growing into a spectacle. A committee has been chosen to handle the situation publicly and the President's assistant Tom has publicly announced the terminal fate of the president.

Dr. Fran the former president was a well-respected leader who had success developing the college. The school was in the process of transforming from a community college into a four-year University. Three programs that helped with development are the nursing, Spanish, and the EMT training program. Under the former president the college had developed a new library and student center. The college was headed to the top until this untimely death shook up the well-laid development plans.

Unfortunately even with all the successful advancement many legitimate concerns exist. Budget limitations and community infrastructure stability threaten the future of the school. Also a forest fire damaged the tourism industry. Therefore financially major obstacles are starting to present themselves.. The faculty is divided and concerned about the transition as well as the future of Tortuga University. Many of the faculty fears that if the school begins offering four-year degrees that the associate

two-year programs will be neglected. Also it is known that the governor has not been very generous in his funding for the school. Moreover much controversy exists about whom if anyone can now lead the school in the directions it was going. In fact multiple individuals involved are considering themselves for the presidential vacancy. Not only the leadership but the future of Tortuga College is eerily uncertain.

In response to the crises the governor has called Tom and appointed his right hand man Joe Martinez as interim President. Tom believes he is the worst possible candidate for the school. Fortunately, Maria Gonzalez is a chair on the board and called Tom for information about leadership and the school. She listens to Tom's concerns about the Governor's appointment and lets him know if he wants to be a candidate then to put his name on a list by the end of the week. She is having a conference call with the Governor and taking the names given to her and discussing them with the Governor as better replacements.

The leadership issues begin with the death of the current President and no obvious heir to the throne. Also different people have their own ideas about who the leader should be and if they should be the leader. In the process of finding the correct person to lead the school those prospective leaders must be willing to put the good of the community before all things including themselves. Moreover the issue that presents itself here is discussed in "The Secrets of Great Groups." All the people involved have an ego and if those persist to dominate everyone's thinking the school will suffer. According to

Jones ego's must be abandoned in order to fulfill dreams. If all those involved in this situation cannot get along then Tortugas College advancement will cease.<sup>1</sup>

The second issue in the case study is things in this transition are moving to quickly. The Governor is trying to make decisions without first gathering the necessary information to do what is best for the school. In "*Leading Transition: A New Model for Change*". Bridges states that change is external but transition is internal and in order for change to work people must have time to reorient themselves. That time period consists of three stages: saying good bye, going into neutral, and moving forward. Although the Governor must make changes he must also give all those involved time to react.<sup>2</sup>

A third issue presenting itself is that Fran the former president is going to be hard to replace. As a female she overcame many obstacles that are outlined in *Struggling for authentic human synergy and a robust democratic culture: The Wellspring for Women in Educational Leadership*. She was not afraid to challenge authority and express her self-discovery which was full of cultural insight.<sup>3</sup> Whoever follows Fran has a tough job ahead of them. Furthermore this school was not prepared for a change of leadership. Fran and her colleagues successfully advocated change in many areas and now the leader of those changes is gone. Many are not going to want to deviate from her plans but without her alterations may need to be made.

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<sup>1</sup> Bennis , Warren (1997).The Secrets of great groups. *Leader to Leader*. 3, 29-33.

<sup>2</sup> Bridges, Susan (2000).Leading Transition a new model of change. *Leader to Leader*. 16, 30-36.

<sup>3</sup> Hackney, Catherine E. (2003).Struggling for Authentic Human Synergy and a Robust Democratic Culture: The Wellspring Community for Women in Educational Leadership . *Advancing Women*. 3, 1-2.

Handy outlines in his article about organizational change how Elephants, Tortuga in this instance, were doing so many things right that they did not want this change in leadership or direction. Now some fleas, in this case new leaders, must come along and get everyone on board.<sup>4</sup>

A fourth issue presenting itself is financial instability within the school as well as the community. The Governor controls funding and the town is not a bustling metropolis of enterprise. Without proper funding the school will neither be able to cultivate new programs or stabilize the services they are already providing. In G.R Hickman's article on transformatic leadership the necessity of economic stability is emphasized. Hickman states that all organizations become human entities and in order for success to occur they must obtain capital resources to complete their work.<sup>5</sup> Regardless of whom the next leader is if the financial situation is not improved then the entire community will suffer.

The next step is to get an interim President that all those involved feel good about as the leader. Secondly they need to wait to do all these things until after the funeral and deaths fall out of the spotlight. During this time period of I would say two weeks all those involved need to have honest and open communication about what is best for the future of the school. Then come together and make decisions. Whatever the outcome Tom needs to remain a major factor in all of the schools decision because he obviously helped to make the school what it is today.

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<sup>4</sup> Handy, Charles (2002).Is your company prepared for change. *Leader to Leader*. 2, 17-18.

<sup>5</sup> Hickman, G.R (1996).Transforming leadership in transformistic organizations: A framework for institutional and societal capacity building. *Acadamy of Leadership*. 3, 14-15.

In order for this to occur Tom must provide a list to Maria Gonzalez for potential candidates that would be good for the school. In doing this Tom must put the good of the school community as the primary focus of his recommendations.<sup>6</sup> Lastly while the Governor makes this decision all parties involved must openly communicate to keep the school functioning at the best possible level. As emphasized in Hollander's article about followers, without cooperation and communication then regardless of the situation the outcome will be detrimental to all parties involved.<sup>7</sup> When the interim President is brought in all people involved must be willing to go through another transforming leadership process just as they did with Fran. If people really care about the school they will submit to the new leader and help Tortuga fulfill its potential. Therefore they need to resist the temptation to manipulate who is power but empower themselves by working hard not only for the university but the new leader as well. True empowerment is according to Meyerson is making a difference in whatever role an individual is given. The people at the bottom of the chain of command can make a difference as well.<sup>8</sup>

In conclusion in order for this crises situation to be resolved smoothly leaders and followers alike must handle all situations with a commitment to moral standings accompanied with honesty. If the any person lies then all that was established by Fran will die along with her.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Hack, Dee (2000). *The Art of Chaordic Leadership. Leader to Leader. 15, 20-26.*

<sup>7</sup> Hollander, E. P. (1997). "How and why active followers matter in leadership." *The Balance of Leadership & Followership Working Papers . Academy of Leadership Press.*

<sup>8</sup> Meyerson, D. (2002). "Everyday leaders: The power of difference." *Leader to Leader, No. 23.* The Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management.

<sup>9</sup> Cuilla, J. B. "Leadership and the problem of bogus empowerment." *Academy of Leadership.*

