

J. Michael Locke

Musings

#89: Walk around to get a Feel **August 16, 2020**

We recently had the pleasure of dropping off our daughter for her freshman year at Texas Christian University (TCU). We had a great experience and it reminded me of the good management practice of walking around to get a feel for an organization. Whether it is a school, a business or some other organization, you learn a lot by just walking around and observing.

Are the employees friendly? Do they look you in the eye and say hello? Every single member of the TCU community gave us a warm welcome. It was genuine. They were happy to see us.

Are the employees engaged? Are they just going through the motions of “a job” or do they “feel ownership”? From the first interaction with the campus police directing traffic, every employee went out of their way to be helpful. They were welcoming us “to their house” as they stood outside in 104 degrees. They felt ownership and pride in their organization, usually ending the interaction with the Horned Frog hand symbol (that’s right – the mascot is a Horned Frog – long story there).

Are employees available? At TCU, they were everywhere. Almost on every corner. There was simply no way you were not going to be able to get help or get lost. Compare this to places like Best Buy or Home Depot where you go searching for help.

Is the organization “customer centric”? TCU had looked at everything from the moving in student’s perspective. Big construction garbage bins outside the dorm for you to throw away your boxes (even emptied during the day so as to not fill up!). RAs walking the halls to greet everyone. Every dorm room furnished with refrigerator/microwave.

Compare all of this to Theranos (good book “Bad Blood” if you haven’t read it). The author discusses closed doors, pulled shades, employees looking down etc. That should have been enough to pass on the investment.

My mentor Bob King taught me to show up early if you are doing “branch inspections.” You get a real feel by the unstructured, unplanned interactions with the folks really doing the work “at the staff/line level.” This basically the premise behind the TV show “Undercover Boss.”

So if you want a feel for an organization, just walk around. Go Frogs!

Be safe.

Jml

Second Thoughts

I am surprised by the lack of “philosophical” discussion on the request by Democrats that the Federal government give large amounts of money to state and local governments in the next Coronavirus package. I don’t deny the poor fiscal position of many state/local governments and the damage the pandemic has caused. However, they have their own taxing authority and borrowing capability. Why should the federal government borrow to give money to the state/local government? Isn’t that asking state/local taxpayers in healthier places to share burden for state/local taxpayers in places with more difficulty? Governor Pritzker in Illinois has not done any reductions in the state workforce despite individuals not working. Should our friends in Indiana pay for that?

Interesting statistic from Wall Street Journal. If the federal government “extra unemployment benefit” is \$300, 50% of workers will make as much from unemployment as they did while working.

DOJ threatening to sue Yale for discriminating against White and Asian Americans. From the DOJ letter: *“For the great majority of applicants, Asian Americans and whites have only one-tenth to one-fourth of the likelihood of admission as African American applicants with comparable academic credentials. Yale rejects scores of Asian American and white applicants each year based on their race, whom it otherwise would admit.”*

You have to love entrepreneurship. Many colleges are telling students they need to take their classes online and can’t come to campus. Some see an opportunity. Why does that mean the student has to study from home? Why not study from Hawaii?

[princeton-grads-bubble-campus-hotels-remote-hawaii-college](#)