

Leading Together

We have heard all the adjectives to describe 2020. Terms like “unprecedented” are used so often they lose their impact. This time last year, most of us were well into our plans for the fiscal year, assuming it would be similar to the last.

When we first began working from home, I thought it would be a short-term precaution; a few weeks later and we could be back at work. Almost ten months later, it does not seem as “unprecedented” as it once did.

Each of us dealt with struggles this past year, but the change, uncertainty, and even loss has affected us differently. While we are all connected nationally, local impact varies across the country. The commonality we all share is that the pandemic changed our world.

It has been said that no one likes change, even leaders, unless it is “their change.” No one could have anticipated the changes we have seen in the last year. Transitioning to a fully telework environment, practically overnight, presented many challenges. What we knew about office management was upended.

Management is predictable. It assumes consistency. It focuses on processes and solves short-term, immediate problems. While management is more than just “putting out fires,” it cannot deal with the complexity of an ever-changing environment. It is impossible to manage something that does not yet exist. This is where management ends and leadership begins.

Leadership is about realizing futures we never intended to happen; thriving in an environment filled with uncertainty. Leaders cast a vision. They show the future. They take uncertain situations or problems and create a path forward.

This past year has changed how we lead. “Management by walking around” has taken a backseat to video chats. How we connect with those we lead is more difficult and requires deliberate action. Communication is more important than it has ever been.

While we cannot change the past, we can shape the future. Now, more than ever, we need strong leadership in every aspect of our lives. As leaders, we influence others. Whether at work or at home, many look to us for direction.

Whatever this year may hold, our leadership is needed. People are depending on us to communicate and to connect, to speak candidly about the situation we face and cast a vision for moving forward.

One of the greatest strengths we have is each other. There are thousands of leaders across the country who are facing similar challenges. We have a wealth of knowledge across the agency that can help with everything from workflow processes to creative

ideas for connecting with those you lead.

You are not in this alone!

There are times when we all need a sounding board or fresh perspective. NCSSMA can help. NCSSMA is comprised of regional associations with a wealth of leadership knowledge and experience. The leaders in your regional association would love the opportunity to connect with you. This year, enhance your leadership by building and growing your network.

Whatever the future holds, we are stronger when we lead together!

Joe Deaton
NCSSMA FrontLine Editor
Hot Springs, AR