



Greg Bell Uses Bamboo as Tool for Unleashing Personnel

By Linda Jeffries

Have you ever wondered how watering the bamboo cultivates change within an organization?

According to author and motivational speaker Greg Bell, watering the bamboo is at the core of making it happen and is a foundation for breakthrough thinking and inspiring leaders.

Bell delivered a Thought Leader presentation at the AASA national conference Thursday morning.

“Twenty years ago, leadership meant power and authority,” Bell said. “To be a leader, you told people what to do and what to think. Today leadership is about letting go and empowerment. We all need to learn to appreciate ourselves and those around us. It feels good to give appreciation, and it feels even better to receive appreciation.”

Bell suggested each morning that individuals ask themselves, “What great things do you think we will see today?” and at the end of the day ask, “What did you see today?” Leadership, he added, is about the questions we ask ourselves and those around us.

Building positive relationships will benefit organizations today and 10 years from now. Every day, educators plant seeds that are so important, affecting thousands of lives in ways they’ll never know, Bell said.

The giant timber bamboo takes five to six years to actually begin growing. Bamboo farmers have patience, discipline and faith. Education is like growing bamboo – it’s all about the effort, Bell said.



Thought Leader Greg Bell talks about unleashing the potential of teams and individuals on Thursday morning.

Although there is no evidence of growth in the first four years of the bamboo seed being planted, the roots are growing deep into the ground providing a strong foundation for future growth. In the fifth year, the bamboo blossoms and experiences rapid growth of 90 feet within six months.

While the growth is slow, the outcome is miraculous and well worth the wait. Education is much like the bamboo farmers crop, Bell told his audience. The process needs patience, deep roots, effort and water.

When developing relationships, think of the family pet, he said. Dogs understand relationships through unconditional love. A lot of lessons are learned if we simply take on characteristics of a dog.

In today's organizations, employees want to be a part of something. Leaders should have high expectations and provide high levels of support. If you have high expectations and low support, you have a critic. If you have low expectations and low support, you are too passive. If you have low expectations and high support, you're an enabler. High expectations and high support fosters a leader.

When looking at employees, Bell suggests that skill plus will equals results. To explain this notion, he cited an analogy of a high school dance. Employees who have high skills and low will are those sitting on the wall. Those with low skill and low will are those in the parking lot – those who should let go. People with high will and low skill are stepping on toes of others. These are people who need training. Those with high skill and high will are dancing to every song. These are your "go to" people, he said, but be careful because they will burn out, Bell explained.

Bell's book, *Water the Bamboo*, is available at AASA's conference bookstore or online at <http://www.waterthebamboo.com>.

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