

Kiwanis Insider



Rob Parker

Chief Executive Officer

For the Leadership of Kiwanis International

Dear Kiwanis Leaders:

Tackling Global Issues

This week I have had the privilege of participating in a global gathering of leaders wrestling with major issues facing the world in the area of global health, poverty alleviation, education, and climate change. Heads-of-state from 52 countries sat with leaders in business, philanthropy, government officials, and nongovernmental agencies to explore specific strategies and partnerships that could make a difference. This nonpartisan gathering of leaders included some very diverse opinions and approaches, but also some key areas of common interest. Over the course of three days, millions of dollars were committed by these leaders to help solve some very difficult problems. I was reminded this week that Kiwanis International's position as an influential member of the global family comes with great responsibility and opportunity. Our next worldwide service project could leverage our reputation to attract the right corporate, foundation, government, and philanthropic support to do something that would have a lasting impact on the world. As we work towards discovering what that project might be, we are very interested in your input. Of significant interest is ways we could maximize our impact by partnering with others. Please visit www.kiwanisleader.org to share your thoughts through the "Leadership Matters" blog.

Following are a few thoughts from some of the participants in this global gathering:

Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Responding to criticism of organized religion)

"Those who speak against religion are incredibly selective about the evidence they look at when making their case. Religion is like a knife. Use it to cut bread and it is good. Use it to cut off your neighbor's arm and it is not so good."

Wal-Mart CEO H. Lee Scott

"Business has a bias towards action. We have an opportunity to show that doing the right thing is good for people and our business. The positive momentum and pride that this builds in our associates (employees) is very powerful."

Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

"Peace does not come from the barrel of a gun. Interfaith dialog is what creates understanding."

World Bank President Robert Zoellick

"There is a concern in the developing world that the intense focus on climate change will take away from other core issues like poverty and hunger. The developed countries cannot hijack the World Bank to solve the climate change issue."

Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai

"Your financial investment in Afghanistan will include some degree of risk, but with that risk comes the potential of great reward. Afghanistan is open for business."

Former US President Bill Clinton (Commenting on terrorism and extremism)

"Those that focus on our differences will remain in conflict. Those that focus on our shared humanity will live in peace."

Successful Succession

As our leaders throughout the Kiwanis world put the finishing touches on this past year of leadership, there is one final task to be accomplished. Strong leaders always set their successors up for even greater accomplishments in the future. Each of us has a personal responsibility to make sure there is a smooth transition of leadership and each new leader is as prepared as possible for the task ahead. Following are a few thoughts about how to do this well:

1. Communicate directly to your successor your willingness to do whatever you can to ensure their success as a leader.
2. Communicate to as many leaders as possible your desire and intent to be a positive force in support of the new leader or leadership team.
3. Make a commitment to not interfere with the work of the new leader and to never engage in criticism or negative comments.
4. Prepare yourself to re-direct people who continue to come to you with problems/issues.
5. Volunteer to take on a new leadership role that will keep you focused on the positive and unavailable for things that are counterproductive.

Once the administrative year is officially over and you have a chance to slow down a little, take a few moments to make a list of the things that you learned this year about leadership and about people. You might be surprised at how the things you have learned will help you develop as a person and as a leader. The final task is to make a list of all the people who made a difference on your journey and make sure you thank them. Remember to thank them in a way that is disproportionate with their contribution, as it is probably the only payment they will receive.

Lastly, please accept my personal gratitude for your willingness to share your skills, talents, and experience with the Kiwanis family. You are the one!

Thanks for leading.

Rob