



Pre-Summit Conversation

Reflections and Themes

January 2003

Sampling of Most Quotable Quotes

Pre-summit conversation facilitators were asked to record what was the most quotable quote that came out of each their conversations. The following is a sampling of quotes from conversation participants who gave permission for the release of their conversation results:

In the future at ORD, people will be encouraged to take initiative and put good ideas into practice.

— Becki Clark, NCER

When leading, don't be afraid to ruffle feathers.

— Brian Eder, NERL

Those of us in leadership positions must be willing to become followers. We have something to learn from everyone.

— Dan Murray, NRMRL

Anyone can be a leader at any particular time – when you see something needs done, do it.

— Donna Tucker, NCEA

Employees should be “pushing the envelope” rather than making them or stuffing them; they should be rewarded for being provocative rather than for being conformist.

— Elizabeth Wilson, NRMRL

I enjoy the freedom to be able to develop my job and the opportunity to develop myself in the job.

— Evelyn Poole-Kober, NERL

Leadership at every level occurs when there is an appreciation for all parts of the whole such that there is no competition between the parts, and there is a willingness to work on helping the weaker parts become strong.

— Gary Foley, NERL

Leadership at its best places the right employees, from all disciplines, together to solve a problem, leverages their commitment to achieve EPA's mission to protect the environment, and allows them to come to provide flexibility to customers for solutions.

— Joseph Dlugosz, NHEERL

You can't lead if one always has to ask before acting

— Kathy McBride, NHEERL

We need to strive for excellence and accept sincere attempts.

— Kevin Teichman, OSP

Everyone wins when people suspend beliefs about each other.

— Paul Gilman, IOAA

Leaders can foster trust by [being a] leading example.

— Paul Groff, NRMRL

“We” accomplishes a lot more than “I” or “you.”

— Peggy Harris, NHEERL

[In 2005] If you didn't know the organization, it would be difficult to tell the difference between managers and non-managers.

— Peter Durant, ORMA

For an organization to meet its goals, all employees need to take ownership of them — take the mission to heart and infuse it into their work daily. In an organization where there is leadership at every level, people pull their own weight and their ideas are listened to and respected.

— Sarah Bauer, OSP

I learned that collaboration isn't always rosy—there are always fights, arguments, crises, whatever—you have to be willing to let that happen. A lot of organizations shy away from conflict right before there could be a payoff.

— Sue Euling, NCEA

What motivates me and keeps me at the EPA is the type and quality of the science being conducted. It is science that saves people's lives, keeps us safe, and ultimately improves the quality of our lives and the environment.

— Tom Hughes, NHEERL

Overall Sense of What Was Most Important

Pre-summit conversation facilitators were asked to record their sense of what was most important to each individual with whom s/he had a conversation. The most common (frequently recurring) themes in their responses are as follows:

Working together

- Collaborating/networking with others
- Working together as a community toward common goals
- Working with opposing views to creatively problem solve

Making a difference/commitment to mission

- Contributing to the greater good, benefitting the public, making a difference for the environment
- A strong sense of purpose; commitment to our mission/environmental protection
- Achieving results, accomplishing the task, solving big problems

Having good work

- Having important/challenging work assignments
- Having skills/talents used
- Having opportunities to grow/learn
- Working in a research/scientific environment; sound science

Providing applied research products

- Successful transfer of science to the decision making community
- Quick transfer of research knowledge to all those who may need it

Being trusted, supported and valued

- Support from the top/management/organization for my work
- Being trusted to do what's right; confidence/trust in one another
- Positive feedback; recognition/reward for efforts/work done
- Feeling valued/truly appreciated

Being empowered and included

- Autonomy, flexibility, freedom and/or independence in performing work
- Able to participate in defining/setting direction of work
- Ability/opportunity to contribute

Being people of character

- Open, honest communication
- Ethics and integrity in interactions and work
- Respect for each individual
- Mutual respect for one another

Common Themes Related to Leadership

Many pre-summit conversation participants talked about leadership, including the kind of leadership that helped make their high-point experiences possible, leadership qualities needed from ORD's people to preserve the organization's strengths and create new potential, and what leadership at every level would look like in their image of the future of ORD. Conversation facilitators recorded the 1-3 themes that stood out most during each of their conversations related to leadership. The most common (frequently recurring) themes are as follows:

Leadership can and does occur at all/various levels throughout ORD now

Leadership by one person engenders respect, performance and leadership in followers

Several conditions have given rise to peak experiences/personal leadership and would foster more leadership at all/various levels throughout ORD

- Authority, flexibility, freedom, independence and responsibility to do/complete work
- Open and effective communication and information sharing
- Clear sense of direction/expectations
- Motivated, caring and supportive managers/supervisors/leaders
- Trusting and trustworthy managers/supervisors/leaders
- Appreciation/recognition for a job done well
- Promotion of a team environment
- Effective use of individual skills, strengths and interests
- Sense that my contribution/job is important; having the opportunity to make a difference

Several qualities are most admired/desired in ORD managers/supervisors/leaders and would characterize leadership at its best in ORD

- Ethics, honesty and integrity
- Being trusting and trustworthy, acting honestly and believing others will do likewise
- Being respectful of others, respecting others' opinions and treating everyone with respect
- Providing a good example, walking the talk, serving as a role model/mentor

- Being fair and even-handed, treating people equitably
- Being positive, enthusiastic and passionate, instilling energy and enthusiasm in others
- Taking a genuine interest in people; knowing their capabilities, skills, strengths, weaknesses and interests; caring about their desires, wants and needs
- Challenging people, recognizing and utilizing their unique skills to accomplish important work
- Being encouraging/supportive, having faith in your ability, supporting your advancement and growth, seeing you succeeding
- Being a strong communicator, providing clear direction/expectations/goals and sharing information
- Being interested, ready and willing to listen to others' ideas, valuing everyone's opinion
- Being flexible and open-minded and encouraging open-mindedness
- Willingness to take changes/risks, willing to make difficult decisions, open to change
- Being an advocate of collaboration, cooperation and interaction, promoting a team environment
- Serving the good of the whole rather than of a part or their own good
- Being visionary/forward thinking
- Seeing value in everyone's contribution and valuing everyone's contribution
- Being appreciative, giving positive feedback as well as recognition/rewards for contributions/creativity/innovation/good work at all levels
- Being accountable for their actions and decisions

Common Themes Related to Collaboration

Many pre-summit conversation participants talked about collaboration, including the kind of collaboration that helped make their high-point experiences possible; stories of collaborative efforts that resulted in unexpected, extraordinary or outstanding achievement; and conditions/factors that contribute to effective collaboration. Conversation facilitators recorded the 1-3 themes that stood out most during each of their conversations related to collaboration. The most common (frequently recurring) themes are as follows:

Collaborative efforts have been used/are being used effectively in many contexts

- Roundtable discussions with contractors to enhance working relationships
- Local trust and communications work groups
- Cooperative agreements
- Work of various ORD and L/C/O councils
- Scientific research studies

Collaboration/team work has many benefits

- More robust studies, better results, higher quality products
- Stimulated creativity, new ideas, innovation
- Enhanced productivity and cost savings
- Personal sense of value in the work and enhanced meaning to work
- Greater connection to the research/mission of ORD
- Transfer of knowledge/skills
- Strengthened relationships, networks and friendships
- Greater appreciation of each other and for diversity
- Broadened perspective
- Fun

Several conditions have contributed to effective collaboration and/or would foster more/better collaboration

- Clear, common/shared goals and/or vision
- Hard work, commitment, dedication and persistence of all team members; everyone wants to help succeed
- Atmosphere of teamwork and cooperation; sense of interdependence; willingness to assist others; “we” talk

- Diverse and complementary abilities, experiences, knowledge and strengths; everyone brings something to the table and everyone contributes
- People are enthusiastic, motivated and positive, and they’re doing what they like to do
- Individual responsibility and accountability; individual ownership/leadership for tasks
- Mutual respect/respectful relationships; openness to others’ approaches, ideas and thoughts; and appreciation of different views
- Lots of good, honest, open communication/information sharing, including regular meetings/frequent conversations
- Clear roles and common understanding of everyone’s role
- Appreciation for and recognition of everyone’s role and contribution
- People being willing to put needs of the project, group and/or organization above individual pride, needs or wants
- People know one another; they seek to learn about others and their abilities and are willing to learn from others
- Group autonomy with management empowerment and support
- Strong leadership/facilitation
- Permission and encouragement for collaboration/team work by leaders/managers

Collaboration across ORD is important/needed/vital to maintain a strong, successful research organization

Common Themes Related to Carrying Forward What We Value Most

Pre-summit conversation participants talked about what ORD does best and what they value most, including the core strengths, values, qualities and ways of working they want to see preserved and leveraged as ORD moves into the future. Conversation facilitators recorded the 1-3 themes that stood out most during each of their conversations related to what should be carried forward into the future. The most common (frequently recurring) themes are as follows:

Professional/workforce development

- Advancing and enhancing our talents
- Providing mentoring, coaching and training
- Providing creative and innovative career development opportunities
- Keeping existing talent, hiring bright new talent
- Maintaining the student programs

Working together

- Collaboration, team work, networking and sharing of ideas among L/C/Os
- Developing partnerships with outside experts
- Networking at scientific meetings, workshops and conferences
- Collaborating with academics, students, and private sectors scientists

Making a difference/commitment to mission

- Commitment to the mission; spirit of dedication
- Preservation of the environment
- Motivation by a higher purpose

Sound science and spirit of inquiry

- Excellent research and science; scientific integrity
- Maintaining our core research niche; understanding that science is central
- Open minds; being on the forefront of discovery
- Initiating new ideas, new paradigms and creating opportunities to discover

Being empowered and included

- Autonomy to direct the research; technical freedom
- Empowered to do the work and take risks; tolerance for mistakes
- Freedom and independence to discover
- Respecting, recognizing and valuing administrative knowledge; bridging the gap between administration and science

Open and responsive communication

- Improving communication between management and staff
- Honest communication
- Keeping staff informed about goals and resources

Customer/client focus

- Listening to our customers and clients
- Having a better connection with our customers
- Developing products for the end-users

Common Themes Related to Image of the Future of ORD

Pre-summit conversation participants talked about their ideal image of ORD in 2005, including what leadership at every level looks like, what is happening that exemplifies an ORD that ensures the vitality of our planet, and what changes would help to realize the ideal ORD of the future.

Conversation facilitators recorded the 1-3 themes that stood out most during each of their conversations related to the image of the future ORD. The most common (frequently recurring) themes are as follows:

- There is collaboration between L/C/Os and more cooperation, interaction, networking and teamwork among staff
- There are strong relationships and interaction with academe, national and international experts and the private sector
- There is strategic recruiting and ORD attracts high quality personnel
- ORD provides cross-training, mentors, internal grooming and challenging assignments
- Diversity exists throughout ORD
- There is open, honest communication between management and staff, including frequent communication about resources, science and projects, as well as ongoing communication among staff
- People are open minded, forward thinking, and express new ideas without fear
- The Agency's mission and goals are clearly communicated
- Everybody understands how their work contributes to the Agency's mission, purpose and goals
- People are accountable, responsible, self-motivated, self-starters, and empowered to take initiative and risks
- There is an infusion of trust throughout ORD
- People are happy, friendly, respected, cheerful, excited and thrilled to work in ORD
- People are valued and recognized
- There is less bureaucracy and hierarchy, less administrative work and no elitist attitudes
- Leaders are visionary, involved, fluid, dynamic, trustworthy, honest, up-front, fair and collegial
- Managers are supportive, help staff succeed, empower staff, and have good management skills
- ORD is recognized, respected and has a reputation as a world class research organization

