



AG NEWSLETTER

LEADERSHIP TRAITS

Having the privilege of growing up in rural Illinois, one couldn't help but notice the wonderful leadership provided by good caring people from agricultural and farming roots. My career in public education as a teacher, coach, principal, and superintendent reaffirmed my childhood memories. I have had the opportunity to witness firsthand the exceptional leadership of these individuals as they served unselfishly to make a positive difference in our schools, communities, churches, and countless civic organizations. One can only hope our national and state elected officials will demonstrate these same traits.



Harlan "Butch" Cotter

Please allow me to share with you a summary of the outstanding leadership traits I have witnessed in my sixty plus years in rural Illinois. I was given great "roots and wings" by these leaders, and it is my hope if you have the opportunity to serve, these traits will serve you well. In observing great leaders in action, I came to realize, that to them leadership was never a sometime thing or a passing fancy, but always a way of life. To them, leadership was a VERB not a noun. They understood good leadership meant motivating others to get things done; allowing others to find their own reasons to push forward instead of relying on their leaders' ideas was paramount.

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LEADERSHIP TRAITS (CONT)

Exceptional leaders accept their responsibilities, dare to seek out adventure, and embrace the opportunity to serve. They never lose the desire to have hope and vision! Knowledge and experience allow a leader to know what to do, but leaders know beyond a shadow of a doubt it is virtue that gets things done!

The very best leaders keep their promises, confidences, and temper! They tend to blame softly and praise loudly while seeing people for what they can become not who they seem to be. It is easy to follow leaders who are: strong, but not rude; kind, but not bullies; humble, but never timid. The great ones are gracious, patient, compassionate, and forgiving.

Leaders who say, "Let's go do it," not "You go do it" realize how powerful it is when someone says, "LET'S!". Their ability and skill to rally those around them to a common purpose, inspires a confidence that is contagious and makes a positive impact. They know their character doesn't make them great, but it does make them someone worth following. They understand INTEGRITY is the consistency of their character. They wear two badges, their title and their moral authority.

Leaders exhibit commitment, passion, and courage in carrying out their responsibilities. They have the courage to say no and the courage to face

reality. Although challenging, they know their leadership may never pretend, turn a blind eye, or ignore criticism. Successful leaders never isolate themselves in difficult times. They know it is acceptable to be uncertain, but never to be unclear. Experience has taught them to touch one's heart before asking for a hand. Wise is the leader who listens to the whispers and therefore will never have to hear the screams!

Leaders do not always get to choose their circumstances, but they can choose their attitude. This attitude takes the high road and allows people to be more important than things. Precious is the leader who makes time to look, listen, and learn. They have no fear of trying something new because they know that a lone amateur built the ARK, while it took a large group of professionals to build the Titanic.

Enjoy, go forth and LEAD!

Harlan "Butch" Cotter
Reprinted from "Farming with a Future"
by Flanagan State Bank

This is our tribute to a great man that recently passed and will be missed by all of us. Butch made a positive difference in all he met. He "treated everyone he met with kindness and respect" and spent his life in the service of others.



GRAIN BIN ENTRY SAFETY CHECKLIST

1. Is entry necessary? Can the assigned task be accomplished from the outside? Under certain conditions, a worker could use a non-conductive pole (such as fiberglass or wood) of sufficient length to probe the grain in a bin from immediately above the top hatch, without entering. However, to prevent electrical injury, workers should first verify that there are no overhead electric powerlines near the grain bin that a pole might contact. Also, for fall protection, workers should wear a harness with a lifeline tied off to a secure anchorage point on top of the bin.

Employers should address the following items (beginning with # 2) only if entry into a grain bin has been determined necessary:

2. Are grain bins and other confined spaces posted with warning signs where workers will notice them? In this incident, a warning sign was posted on the top hatch where the victim entered.

3. Has the grain bin auger been de-energized and locked out/tagged out prior to entry?

4. Has consideration been given to testing the air quality to determine an adequate oxygen level and the presence of flammable and/or toxic dust, gas, or vapor?

5. Is ventilation equipment of explosion-proof design available and used before and during entry? Some grain storage bins, like the one in this incident, have an electric fan built into the side of the bin at the bottom. The fan can be operated to pull air from the top of the bin and out the bottom. In this incident, the fan was not used (Figure 10).

6. Do workers know how and when to use the following personal protective equipment?:
(a) Respirators (air-supplying and air-purifying)
(b) Lifelines/harnesses
(c) Emergency rescue equipment (SCBA, human hoist, etc.)



- (d) Protective clothing
- (e) Eye protection
- (f) Hard hats
- (g) Gloves

7. Can workers recognize confined spaces (grain bins, tanks, silos, etc.), and are they aware of their hazards?

8. Do workers discuss confined space safe work practices with employers and co-workers before attempting entry?

9. Is there a confined space rescue plan, and do workers know how to respond safely in an emergency?



HARVEST CHECKLIST

1. Create Inspection Checklist

- Start in late July/Early August about a month before harvest on creating a checklist
- Getting this list put together early will help you go through the equipment thoroughly and effectively
- Pull equipment out of shed to clean, inspect, and repair – this will make everything easier to see/fix
- Start from the front of the piece of equipment and work your way back
- If possible, clean equipment up before putting it away in the fall – it will be easier to get ready for the next year

2. Clean Farm Equipment if Needed

- It is easier to inspect clean equipment and it is easier to find fluid leaks
- Clean up decks, housings, and rakes of any debris
- While cleaning note any repairs needed

3. Use a farm equipment inspection checklist. An example would be:

- Nuts and Bolts – make sure all are tight and secure.
- Tires – check pressure and tread wear – check lug nuts.
- Blades – sharpen and replace as needed.
- Cutter bars/Grain platform/skid plates – check to make sure all of these are secure with no flexibility. Check for wear.
- Mirrors – Make sure they are clean and are in the best position for visibility.
- Fluids – Check and/or change all fluids and filters – Fuel/Hydraulic/Coolant/Oil
- Hitches – Make sure you have the proper pins and keepers for the equipment.
- Brakes – Check and make sure these are working properly.
- Cooling System – Look for cracks and leaks when checking levels.
- Hoses/Belts/Chains/Plastic Parts – Check all belts, rubber hoses, and plastic parts for wear or cracks and replace as needed. Make sure all belts and chains are properly tightened and adjust properly. Replace any that look worn.
- Hydraulic Lines – The best way to test the hydraulic systems is to pressurize them and look for leaks. However, beware that not all leaks will create a telltale puddle.
- Batteries – Does the battery hold a charge? If not, replace.
- Engine and Steering – Making sure the area is clear, start the engine, let fast idle for 3 minutes. Check to make sure if any fuel, air, or oil filters need to be replaced or tightened. Also, ensure steering and exhaust systems are in working order.
- Safety Equipment – Make sure all shields and guards are in place and in good working order.
- Yield Monitors, GPS, and gauges – Adjust and calibrate these tools to ensure they are providing accurate information.
- Document all work done – Keep track of everything done to the equipment – this will help cut repair costs

4. Do a final walk around

- Check to make sure all lights are in working order – headlights, taillights, and turn signals. Replace as needed.
- Make sure Slow-Moving-Vehicle signs are still reflective and visible from behind vehicle.

5. Reflect on Last Year's Harvest

- Try to think if there was anything that needs to be changed or updated.
- This can be hired personnel, loading/unloading of grain, lunch breaks, start times.
- The goal should be to have a safe and successful harvest

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HARVEST CHECKLIST (CONT)

CORN & BEANS

- ☐ • Cutting Parts – Sections, Bars, and Rivets
- ☐ • Sickle – Service and Parts
- ☐ • Cylinder – Teeth and Nuts
- ☐ • Drapers and Accessories
- ☐ • Chopper Belts – Tight and Working Accordingly?
- ☐ • Roller Chain, Sprockets, Chain Lube
- ☐ • Grease and Grease Gun – Document greased parts

TRACTOR / MACHINE

- ☐ • Hydraulic Lines – Leaks/Secured
- ☐ • Fluids – Oil, Hydraulic, Transmission
- ☐ • Engine and Steering – Check cable, fluids
- ☐ • Hitches – All pins secured properly
- ☐ • Grease and Grease Gun – Document greased parts
- ☐ • Plates and Covers – Bolts Tightened and Secure
- ☐ • Bearings – Checked and in working order
- ☐ • Batteries – Holding Charge?
- ☐ • Mirrors – Cleaned and positioned correctly
- ☐ • Brakes – Check to make sure working properly
- ☐ • Cooling System – Anti-Freeze, hoses, leaks
- ☐ • Tires – Check for holes/Pressure/Lug Nuts
- ☐ • Yield Monitors/GPS

SAFETY / PREVENTATIVE

- ☐ • Gauges – Functioning Properly
- ☐ • Filters – cabin air filters cleaned?
- ☐ • Lights – Flashers, Running Lights, Turn Signals
- ☐ • Toolbox – Essential Tools
- ☐ • Spare Parts – Parts to Do Quick Fix if Needed
- ☐ • Duct Tape – The “Fix All”
- ☐ • Cabin Foam – Sealed correctly?
- ☐ • Shop/Paper Towels and Glass Cleaner
- ☐ • Fire Extinguisher
- ☐ • Fuel Transfer Pumps and Nozzles
- ☐ • Hand Cleaner
- ☐ • Safety Supplies – bandages, gloves, towels
- ☐ • DOCUMENT ANY CHANGES/UPGRADES NEEDED



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Harvest is almost here and that means you have some marketing decisions to make that can impact what your bottom line looks like. If corn is going to the elevator, are you going to sell across the scale, or pay storage and hold it? Are you going to fill the bin, or leave it empty? Let's look at some of these decisions in more detail.

Since we are creatures of habit, we can look back and say that storing corn in the elevator paid off last year, so I am going to do it again this year. I think what you have to ask yourself is how many years does it really pay off for you? I think you also have to ask yourself 'is the cash market telling me to store?' Look at the difference between December and March futures. Is there enough difference to justify storage? After that, you look at basis (difference between the futures price and the elevator price) and how is it this year compared to many years in the past. Right now, fall basis is actually better than average, which is likely telling you to be a seller. If basis is historically good, and there is a lack of futures carry, the market is trying to tell you to sell. If you ignore those signs, you are likely storing just on the thought (hope) that the market works higher after harvest.

Did you know there is another way to stay in the market, without holding onto the physical commodity? You can sell it, and they use call options to stay in the market. If we do go higher, your call option will gain in value, which would add to your cash sales price. The last several years, the cost of the call option was the same, or cheaper, than the storage charge would have been. This strategy gives you the upside potential that you are looking for, but it also limits the downside risk. Since the corn is already sold, if the market goes lower, we only have the risk of the cost of the call option. If we store grain, and the market goes lower, we take that lower price and still pay the cost of storage.

Let's put it into real dollars to illustrate as well. If you can make 200 bu/acre corn, and sell at \$5.00 across the scale, you gross \$1,000/acre. At 220 per acre, and \$5.00, you are at \$1,100/acre. For beans, 65 bu/acre at \$13.00 is \$850/acre. This is big money that you are risking by storing and hoping for something even higher. Why not take what the market is giving you and have the money in your pocket, and have call options in place in case the market is willing to give you more? Think back across your farming career and ask yourself how many years you were facing gross income levels that were this high. I think there is too much money on the table to be taking the risk of storing and ignoring, especially when there is a strategy out there that allows you to take the profit, but still be in the market if we go higher.

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2022 Marketing Ideas

It is also not too early to be looking at 2022 marketing. Compared to the past several years, prices for 2022 are very strong as well. Why would we not be looking out there? The main answer that everyone will give is that input prices are going to be much higher for 2022 and we need higher prices to make it work. While I agree that inputs will be up, because they will be, shouldn't that also be the main reason to be looking at 2022 marketing? You won't have near the cushion if the market works back lower if your cost of production is higher. Can you afford to take the risk of planting a crop with higher costs, and not consider what the marketing opportunity is today? A great scenario would be if you could establish a price floor, while keeping your upside open. Well, this is where put options come into play. They can provide you a floor and give you upside potential because the physical grain has not been sold yet. The hope would be that the floor the put option would give you would be high enough to insure some profit if the market fell apart. If the market falls apart, and we do nothing to protect it, we could easily be looking at another year of loss, when it could have been prevented. In most cases, 2020 ended up being a good profit year, with 2021 likely being a very good (and potentially record) profit year. If you can make plans to protect 2022, you can make that year a success as well, even if the market does fall apart. One has to consider 2022 marketing now because the market is historically high for this time of year and there is no guarantee that prices stay this high.

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