



“Dare to Dream”

**by Paul Graham
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Most of us, at The Blue Mountains, believe that we are part of a very good organization and that generally speaking we are respected as leaders in local government. We also believe that there are a lot of opportunities to improve, to be better.

As your Chief Administrative Officer, I’m here to tell you my dream; to be acknowledged as the best municipal government in Ontario within five years; a preferred employer providing great service; an awesome place to work! This is a bold goal! I believe that we can do it.

Today I’m kicking off a dialogue with all of you about organizations that instill leadership skills, management skills and technical skills in all of their employees. Why? To ensure that every individual working at The Blue Mountains has an opportunity to grow to his or her full potential; to ensure that they thrive at The Blue Mountains and to prepare them for future career opportunities that will arise. For it is simple; the better each individual becomes, the better the organization becomes.

We already work very effectively together. I believe that it is time for us to move to the next level; working together to build an organization that is built to last and to build a sustainable community that will thrive into the future. Built to last! What we do here over the next few years will set the stage for the future. This is not about more work! It's about working differently! It will require new skills and new thinking!

A well thought out approach is required! The Town's Strategic Plan talks of a well managed workplace. This is much more than that. It is about leadership, about dreams and about ambition; the burning desire to be the best.

When you see something that can be improved, speak your mind! This organization will respect you for it. Let's be realistic! Not every suggestion can be implemented. I've lost lots of debates at the Senior Management table! That's because several minds are better than one! We make better decisions this way.

Several of us have attended the Leading, Educating And Developing course at the University of Virginia. It has encouraged us to dream about such an organization. We want to bring the University of Virginia to The Blue Mountains to talk to Council and Staff about what they have learned about organizations that dare to dream.

I believe that great teams and great organizations do not happen by accident.

I would like all of you to think about the power of reputation. Reputation is a tremendous attractor for high quality staff; a place where you can thrive and grow. We must earn respect in our community and in our industry.

The foundation of all of this is trust. Building trust is critical to allow staff teams to have passionate debate without fear of collateral damage. By fear of collateral damage, I mean fear of retribution. Passionate debate is so critical in getting commitment to implement decisions that will be made over the years.

Commitment is necessary to be able to hold each other accountable for our actions. For if one part of the team or the organization does not live up to its commitments, they hurt the whole organization. Finally, by holding each other accountable, we will focus on the results anticipated when the decisions were made.

The dream is to develop this local government, The Blue Mountains, in a way that differentiates us from all the rest; to be an awesome place to work. To develop a culture so that when we move on, as we all will, those who follow will be driven, and I say driven, to maintain what we have started; an organization “built to last”.

I encourage all of you to read “Good to Great” by Jim Collins. We now have lots of copies of an abbreviated form of the book on local government. Collins says, and I love this, that achieving our goal will take “disciplined people, involved in disciplined thought, focused on disciplined actions”.

Let me say that to you again, “disciplined people, involved in disciplined thought, focused on disciplined actions”. Collins also talks about executive leadership.

This executive leadership is required to build enduring greatness through a blend of personal humility and unwavering professional will.

This is not about individuals! It is about team and organization! For we know if the team and the organization do well so will we all. We need executive leadership skills at all levels of our organization.

My leadership is based on a value system; a belief, a wish to mentor and coach and see all around me thrive and grow. I believe that all of you have a higher purpose than just your job description. I believe that our job is to develop a community that is “built to last”, a community that will thrive into the future. I say to you this will take “disciplined people, involved in disciplined thought, focused on disciplined actions”; everyone using the same words, with the same message, layers upon layers, all pushing relentlessly in the same direction! Like a flywheel building momentum all the time.

We will develop flexible policies that give you the freedom to use your own creativity, to find innovative solutions to problems. We will support your decisions. We’ll make mistakes, we’ll learn from them, we’ll fix them and we’ll move on.

The Blue Mountains is a good organization and I feel so privileged to be here with you. I have worked the last two years as your CAO with one goal in mind; to earn your trust. Now I need your help.

We have great people on our bus with the diverse range of backgrounds and experience that we need. We have a great Council. Together we will make great decisions.

Our Senior Management Team now wants to have discussions in all Departments prior to bringing John Pickering from the University of Virginia to town in the Fall of 2009!

Remember the dream; to be acknowledged, I say acknowledged, as the best municipal government in Ontario; a preferred employer providing great service; an awesome place to work, all focused on a "Community Built to Last".

Thank you.