

Association Executives of North Carolina

Success *Live*

BY ASSOCIATION

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EXCITING CHANGES COMPLETED AT THE BENTON

A \$1.5 million dollar refresh has taken place in downtown Winston-Salem's Twin City Quarter at the Benton Convention Center.

The project's showpiece, The Gallery Ballroom with 24,000 square feet of expansive space, comfortably accommodates 2,000 theater style, 1,200 for receptions and 900 for banquets, plus nearly 120 exhibit booths. Designed in warm, neutral tones with bright accent colors, the conference space features new LED lighting, all new Wi-Fi and furnishings, rigging points, natural light and public art.

This reinvention also encompasses an additional ballroom, 2 boardrooms, 7 meeting rooms and an outdoor reception area. The 43,000 square foot project is awaiting your consideration.

Contact Floyd Isley at 336.397.3602 or floyd.isley@twincityquarter.com to assist with your next meeting.



Educational Article

Three Cups of Coffee

Brian Etheridge

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Three Cups of Coffee

A Model for Bridging Divides and Fostering Curiosity in Leaders

By: Brian Etheridge

Heaviness

Since March 2020 there is much we have experienced as leaders, North Carolinians, and Americans.

All of us, our families, our friends, our neighbors, our constituents have been impacted by COVID in varying degrees.

During the summer of 2020, following the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and others, protests sprang up across the country and around the globe around social injustice, inequality, and police brutality.

Then on January 6, 2021, a violent insurrection took place at the United States Capitol resulting in five law enforcement officers losing their lives protecting the Capital and the certification of the election and many more suffering injuries.

For many, recounting what we have lost, what has changed, what we may have gained, and all that we have experienced over the last two years may be painful. For others, it may be helpful.

It may be worth noticing how much we have adapted to continue to serve those most important to us. It may be helpful to reflect on how much we have learned as we have heard voices we may not have been as attuned to before the summer of 2020. It may be eye-opening to think back on all the ways we have to connect with others we may not have been aware of, or capable of before COVID.

Curiosity

Simon Sinek, the author of *Start With Why* is one of my favorite authors. The quote below is one we reference often at Leadership North Carolina.

"The responsibility of leadership is not to come up with all the ideas but to create an environment in which great ideas can happen." – Simon Sinek

As leaders, it is essential that we do not pretend we have all the answers. Our responsibility is to create an environment in which great ideas can flourish. That's incredibly challenging in this environment. We have major divides within our country, our state, our communities, and oftentimes, within our families. So how do we do it?

I invite you to begin with one word, curiosity. I am a big fan of curiosity. It provides a window into learning a great deal. As a former elementary school teacher in North Carolina, there were many times I learned as much, if not more from my students, than they learned from me. The sense of wonder and the curiosity of a child are remarkable things and something I encourage us all to tap into.

Continuing on this theme of curiosity, one of my all-time favorite books is *To Kill A Mockingbird* and one of my favorite quotes from the book comes from Scout Finch.

"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...until you climb in his skin and walk around in it." – Scout Finch, *To Kill A Mockingbird*

What does it take to understand a person, to consider things from their point of view? Here are three ingredients to make it possible – trust, respect, and an invitation to coffee.

Three Cups of Coffee

For many years, John Davis of the John Davis Political Report has presented to Leadership North Carolina during our Government Session in Raleigh each November. During each presentation, John shares demographic data on our state, the political trends, and his observation that leaders of different political parties do not seem to understand one another as well as perhaps they once did. John reflects that not too long ago, many of these leaders would debate legislation vigorously, but then leave the halls of the General Assembly and share dinners with one another, providing time to get to know one another, to build understanding and trust. They got to know about one another's families and the lives and influences that shaped their perspectives.

Today, there is in some cases, a disincentive to reach across the aisle and build relationships with leaders on the other side. John has a solution. These leaders need to have three cups of coffee with someone who sees the world differently than they do. It is a lesson I think we should take to heart and put into practice.

There is a simple structure for this, but there are two ingredients essential for this to work – trust and respect.

First Cup: Invite someone to coffee and ask that they share with you their life story. What events shaped their views, who were the leaders who shaped their thinking, what memorable experiences impacted them most? Your job is to simply listen without responding or rendering judgement. It is a freeing experience to simply listen without having to plan for a response. Take it all in.

Second Cup: This time, switch roles and you share your story while the other person listens.

Third Cup: At this point, you begin to see where you have areas of commonality and where there may be differences. Begin the process of exploring what you have in common and build on that, ensuring you are adhering to the themes of trust and respect.

You have now invested three coffees in getting to know someone and they have done the same for you. Relationships like these are the foundation to positive change and realizing our state's potential. Leaders need to be in community with one another and understand leaders who see the world differently than they do. It is awful hard to dismiss someone once you get to know them, once you have laid the foundations of a relationship built on trust and respect.

Next Steps

As you reflect on this, I invite you to pull out your phone and send a text or an email to someone who sees the world differently than you do, whose life experience is different than yours. Invite them to coffee and listen. Ask them about what shaped their values, what experiences impacted their perspective, who in their life impacted their views. Listen with curiosity and lean in to build trust and respect. Continue to share this practice with others and invite others to coffee. There is no limit to where this could lead for our state and how we interact with one another.

Brian Etheridge serves as president of [Leadership North Carolina](#), a 501 c3 non-profit, based in Raleigh. Leadership North Carolina (LNC) works with state luminaries to improve North Carolina's quality of life through visionary hands-on programming that integrates the areas of economic development, education, environment, government, and health and human services. Since 1995, LNC has offered a series of cutting-edge programs to current and emerging leaders from all corners of the state. Through six two-and-a-half-day sessions held in locations from the mountains to the coast, LNC participants gain knowledge and build networks that they can leverage personally, professionally, and for the benefit of the state and its people. **Leadership North Carolina's mission is to inform, develop, and engage committed leaders by broadening their understanding of and involvement in issues and opportunities facing the state.**

LNC works with a variety of individuals across multiple industries and the private and public sectors to develop leaders who want to drive improvements and influence outcomes. The program takes a comprehensive, integrated approach that showcases how its five focus areas are deeply intertwined. Core Program participants collaborate on solving real challenges, and they roll up their sleeves to volunteer in ways that enrich and support citizens across the state.

Leadership North Carolina is ideal for individuals who are seeking groundbreaking ideas and hands-on opportunities to make North Carolina an even better place to live. Participation in the prestigious LNC program is open to all residents of North Carolina, and LNC boasts a diverse blend of leaders in its alumni ranks. LNC has proudly served more than 1,300 alumni representing 96 counties across North Carolina.