**Governor Daniel Evans:**
* A Study in Communication and Vision in Leadership
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**INTRODUCTION**

Though we all may not have all of the advantages of “an unlined face, a crisp voice, a pretty wife, and a political philosophy that hardly anyone can object to, because it has not been put to the test”, (The New GOP Breed in the West, 1965) we all can learn from the example that Governor Evans has provided of leadership in the Northwest. Some of the most important aspects of his leadership are his communication and vision.

**A CLEAR MANDATE**

Dan Evans often ran an extremely partisan campaign, and he made it a point to be very clear about the issues that he ran on. Though he often won by very narrow margins, he stuck with the issues on which he ran. If 52% of the people felt that he deserved to win based on the issues that he ran on, he was going to try to get those issues to go through. Too often, there is a temptation to not be clear about the issues on which you stand in order to try to gain support. If you win because you are vague about what you want in order to win an election, then you have no clear mandate and are somewhat stuck even if you won, because you do not have a clear basis on which to stand. On the other hand, Evans also recognized that issues could arise that may not have been campaign issues, but they were issues that needed to be addressed. As Governor Evans said “not everything can be done at once… we have to take things in some priority order… I used to espouse the surfer’s theory of politics…three ways: you can see a wave coming and go too early and crushed… you can wait too long… then you do not have real influence… if
you are right on… then you can go a long way… you can catch the right wave and you can go a long time…”

COURAGE TO PURSUE THE MANDATE

While, the typical politician hoards their political capital, Dan Evans spent it on clear cut and controversial issues. If you spend it well, you gain by spending your capital. So don’t be afraid to spend your capital, just try to make sure you spend it wisely. Two of the main skills that Dan Evans used to pursue his mandate were his budgeting and his communication skills.

FOCUS ON THE BUDGET

It is interesting to note that in an age, where many people are concerned about specific bills and/or programs, that Dan Evans felt that the most important document for any leader should be the budget. Governor Evans made it a point to focus on knowing the budget better than anyone else in the government as a way of arguing for/against programs. As Nat Jackson pointed out, there were several times where departments would make cuts to minority communities, and Governor Evans would ask pointedly how it would affect these communities and how they plan to address the subsequent decrease in service and that perhaps, there were other parts of their budget they would consider looking at. This knowledge carried him a long way in determining the policy/agenda that Washington took during his tenure in office. The budget proved a successful way for setting the agenda and what was going to be addressed during each year. He realized that “You get to a point that you have to say that there is a limit when it comes to the
money…” He pointed out that when it comes to environmental concerns you have to place a limit on the value of a fish whether $100 per fish or $10,000 per fish. At some point you are going to have to say this is it and do the best you can do with the amount of resources that you have available.

ACTIVE COMMUNICATION/TRANSPARENCY

Dan Evans exhibited exceptional communication and transparency during his tenure. He made it a point to hold a news conference twice a week to keep people informed as to what was taking place. As for transparency, in the “Danny Boy” debate, Evans cites many times how he has kept his records open unlike his competitor who kept a number of his records locked away. Evans knew that it not only was important to be clear on what he was doing/trying to accomplish, he recognized that communication involved active listening to the community. On occasion, Evans would go into the community and hear from the citizens what they thought would be useful to them. It was during one of these visits that Evans cites DSHS being formed. “Six angry black teenagers” had more to do with the formation of DSHS than any proposed legislation developed by staffers or politicians.

VISION

Though generally society tends to wait until things are obsolete before we make really make change, Governor Evans made it a point to look down the road to try to make a better Washington for future generations. Gov. Evans gave the admonition to “study demography”. His concern for demography and the impact that it will have on the future
is evidenced by his “Report to the Stockholders of the State of Washington” in 1976. In it he clearly moves through the budget and the forecasted demographics of the state and what that means for the future. His concern for the future is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in getting citizens involved in Alternatives for Washington. Through it, he gathered citizen input on potential directions that the citizens would like to see Washington pursue in the future. Evans started with 150 selected citizens to get the ball rolling and ender up with 40,000 submitted questionnaires to determine where the citizens wanted Washington to head. Evans also recognizes that old rules/regulations need to be revisited and encouraged that at least once every generation, that rules should be looked at to see if they are still serving society as well. After all, as Evans himself points out “Everything collects barnacles.”

CONCLUSION

Though Dan Evans face may be lined, (and I cannot comment on his wife’s present appearance), his voice still rings clear and his political philosophy has been tried and proven to be quite valuable. He serves as an example of how vision and communication can serve to accomplish. Through the process, a cycle is created where Evans ends up encouraging actively engaging society in communication to figure out what should be pursued, standing for those issues, and examining how society is being served/will be served in the years to come. This process is one that many leaders will do well to emulate both now and for years to come.