



In the Winner's Cycle

WELCOME BACK, MIGHTY MOOSE HUNTER!

The large banner was hung on the back wall of the office. A hand-drawn longbow and quiver of arrows adorned the left corner. The right corner featured a bright orange hunting vest. As Pete entered the office a week after his meeting with Cy, he took in the banner and about fifteen managers and staff people standing around the sign. They broke into applause as he approached them.

“Let’s hear it for Pete the Lionhearted,” Harold bellowed. “Hip, hip, hooray! Hip, hip, hooray! Hip, hip, hooray!”

Everyone cheered in unison and applauded again as they finished.

“Whoa! I appreciate the warm reception. But I think you’re going *way* over the top here,” Pete said.

“Speech, speech!” Rosie said.

“Now you’re really putting me on the spot,” Pete replied. “I still have a lot of improvement work to do. And improving

my public speaking is right at the top of my self-development list. I'm flattered by this reception. But I've heard it said that flattery is like aftershave. It smells good, feels brisk and tingly – but is fatal if swallowed."

An appreciative chuckle rippled through the group.

"I am delighted to be back and working with such a great group of people. Many of you played a part in naming and hunting our moose. And we've got lots more hunting to do if we're going to turn this company around."

The welcoming party continued for another fifteen minutes before everyone slowly drifted back to their desks.



"Hi, Pete! How's your first day back in the swamp?" Rosie popped her frizzy head into the conference room. It was mid-afternoon and Pete had played host to many familiar faces welcoming him back throughout the day.

"It feels like this is exactly where I should be. There's certainly no shortage of things to do."

"That's for sure. And you're just the leader to take us forward. The POETS Society is meeting at Rocky and Bullwinkle's for a drink. Our main task is to rename the society. Can you join us?"

"For a short bit. Michelle and I have a dinner date tonight. We have some celebrating to do."

"See you there."



"Here's our conquering hero. Hail Caesar!" Chuck raised his flying squirrel tankard to salute Pete. Others joined in greeting him. It looked like the entire senior management team that Pete was now leading, along with his old operations

management team, were there. Tables had been pushed together to form one large group.

Rosie clanked a spoon against a glass as she rose from her chair. "Your attention, please. I know Pete only has a few minutes with us before he leaves for a hot date." She grinned at Pete. "The main reason we're here is to rename the POETS Society. Until this momentous day, it was the Piss-On-Everything-Till-Sunrise Society. The floor is now open for new name suggestions."

"How about Pete's-Our-Executive-and-Total-Savior."

"I'd veto that one," Pete said. "Your expectations for me are getting way too high. Remember, as far as we've traveled the past few months, we're truly just beginning. The really hard part of our journey is just ahead. And we're going to have to clear out our moose together."

"What about Pave-Over-Everything-in-The-Swamp?"

"Now there's a really environmentally sensitive thought!"

"Put-Our-Energy-Toward-Shooting moose instead of each other," Harold said, raising his glass to Duncan down the table. Duncan smiled and raised his mug in return.

"Praise-On-Everything-Till-Sunrise."

"Pete's-Only..."



The next few months involved some of the hardest work that Pete had ever done. The hours were long and the discussions were difficult. Pete took a few intensive days of training filled with lots of practice and feedback to improve his speaking and presentation skills. It was a grueling and somewhat ego-bruising exercise. In the end the payoff was huge. Pete would look back years later and say it was one of the most significant personal-growth investments he'd ever made.

The training left Pete with a much greater degree of confidence on his feet, whether in front of two or two hundred people. He also learned how to pull together a series of his personal stories and perspectives that powerfully connected with his audience's hearts.

“We need their heads and best thinking,” he explained to Michelle on one of their evening walks. “But we can't just think our way out of this mess to bring about the culture and organizational changes we so desperately need. We must have everybody's passion and emotional energy to fuel the courageous conversations going on up, down, across, out, and all around our company.”

Working with Jason and Heather's guidance and co-facilitation, Pete embarked on an extensive Listen-Feedback-Action process to reach everyone within the client services division. They began by pulling out key themes from the organizational survey that Heather and the HR group had put together earlier in the year.

Pete then organized front-line staff groups in small town-hall meetings within head office and out in all the regional offices. He began with a few personal stories drawn from his early days at NMTS and the difficult challenges they overcame. He then openly related his drift toward going-along-to-get-along and apathy. He talked about his weak moose-hunting attempts and how he finally built up the courage to get serious about tackling the biggest issues – and especially his own leadership shortcomings.

He put a positive spin on getting fired and worked hard not to show Doug in a negative light. Since most people loathed Doug and had heard grapevine versions of Pete's courageous behaviors with Doug, Pete's generous comments toward Doug and his experiences strengthened their respect for him.

After Pete reviewed the early survey results and other data that the strategic imperative teams had collected, the meetings then moved from the feedback to action phase. Jason or Heather alternated sessions with Pete. He actively led every one of the nineteen meetings over a six-week period. Jason and Heather worked with Pete to collect small- and large-group brainstorming ideas. These were clustered into common themes and further discussed within the groups. Everything was recorded and eventually summarized and synthesized with all the other notes.



“Wow! The input is pretty clear and consistent! It also shows that our earlier work in operations mirrors these issues pretty well,” Pete said as he reviewed the notes Heather and Jason had pulled together a few days after the last town-hall meeting. They were in a small conference room that Pete had booked for their meeting. A small stuffed moose was sitting on the table.

The notes showed that the biggest moose issues to be addressed were client service levels, communications, priority overload, departmental silos, system and process misalignment (which included decision making), and accountability and follow-through.

“I’ve got some strong opinions on how we deal with these,” Pete said to Heather and Jason. “But first I’d like to hear yours.”

“We have been talking about an implementation strategy and put together this outline,” Jason said, dropping a short document in front of Pete.

The paper sketched in broad terms how they could realign the Strategic Imperative teams to cut across the whole organization.

“Pete would chair the overall divisional steering team consisting of the leaders from each Strategic Imperative team and Pete’s management team,” Jason said. “I recommend we start with getting your new management team together for an off-site planning session similar to what you did with the operations management team at Elkhorn Lodge. “I’d do an overview of that leadership and organization development material we covered. We would then review this town-hall meeting report and fill in the details of a double-track plan.”

Jason went on to explain that one track would be quick actions that could be taken to get immediate payoffs and quick wins. This would build momentum and boost energy for the long-term changes covered in the other track. “If we’re really targeted and do it right, we’ll also free up many people’s time and significant company dollars from all the wasted efforts now going into rework, resolving client issues, miscommunication problems, errors – or what in our business we call ‘cost of poor quality.’”

They talked through more options and ways to approach the double-track implementation.

“Okay,” Pete said as he sat back in his chair. “Let’s get that management-planning session together. Heather, can you please get right on that? I’ll get dates to you both by the end of the day, once I’ve talked to each of the managers.”

Two and a half weeks later the management team – after furious calendar juggling – had their off-site planning session at a local hotel. It was a highly productive few days of visioning, consensus building, team building, and planning. Each of the Strategic Imperative teams was refocused and members were changed and shuffled to cut across the entire company. Each team was asked to produce a short-term “Quick Wins” plan within three weeks for the divisional steering team.

Right on time, the plans were reviewed and agreed to with few changes. The divisional steering team was very impressed with how thoughtful and potentially effective the plans appeared to be.



Pete was finishing up one of his last town-hall updates, meeting in the company cafeteria. Through a smaller number of much larger meetings, he had managed to reach everyone in their sprawling division with a brief overview of all that was now going on following the LFA sessions they had participated in a month or so before. Each of the Strategic Imperative team leaders also gave updates on the focus and progress of their teams. Pete then wrapped up with the management team's long-term vision for clients services and specific next steps.

He outlined how over the next few months everyone would participate in a one-day program entitled "The NMTS Way."

"The purpose of the program is to expand on our the vision and values, and the ways all of us in management heard you tell us we should be treating each other and our customers," he explained. "The NMTS Way will become the foundation on which we'll build our long-term culture. All of our hiring, promotions, performance management, training, customer service, and key personal, team, and organizational leadership practices will build from this program."

There was a ripple of applause at this.

"Thanks for coming out today and thanks for all your patience and input. We're getting rid of lots of moose. Let's keep that up and let's not go to the zoo like my family did on that rainy day!"

Pete scanned the group. “So stay tuned,” he said. “You ain’t seen nothin’ yet!”

The feeling in the room was electric as attendees rose to their feet and delivered a thunderous ovation.