

Unlocking Potential

Consultant helps people learn to be leaders

By **Betsey Bruner, FBN**

The beginning of a New Year is a good time to refocus attention on professional growth and development, especially if you are a member of an organization or in the world of business.

Assistance in the form of Lancaster Consulting is available for an individual or a team wishing to be trained to enhance their soft skills, set goals and reach them.

To date, Julie Lancaster of Flagstaff has served more than 8,000 people, helping them to lay the groundwork for dynamic relationships and “on purpose” living in business and in life.

“I do retreats, leadership academies, interactive workshops, keynotes, career coaching, and leadership coaching,” said Lancaster, who has been in educational leadership for 22 years and began her consulting business about four years ago.

She works exclusively with professionals who have committed themselves to growth.

The retreat format for organizations allows for thoughtful, strategic advancement that affects the bottom line, she says.

“Retreats give the framework for supporting New Year’s goals and beyond,” Lancaster said. “To maintain optimal health, quarterly is ideal. Most retreats that I facilitate are one day long.”

This optimal health includes moving in the right direction.

“Businesses, at times, can make great time going in the wrong direction,” she explained, “and can suffer from organizational A.D.D. [attention deficit disorder]; without an aligned strategy for moving forward, time and resources can be wasted on disjointed projects. The retreat format allows leaders the opportunity to focus on the right things and hit the ground running once they get back to the office.”

Lancaster’s experience is broad and spans government, higher education, non-profit and private sectors with American and global scope.

“I hire subcontractors for programs where I need a bigger staff or for programs when I’m traveling out of the state for work,” she noted. “Most work is outside of my office, except coaching.”

As part of her leadership academy offering, Lancaster will be conducting academies beginning in February with a number of organizations, including Coconino County, The Grand Canyon Association, Goodwill of Northern Arizona, Performance Staffing and NAIPTA (Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority).

Lancaster, who has a master’s degree in education, discovered her interest in leadership after a



Julie Lancaster emphasizes focusing on just one or two goals at a time to bring about positive, lasting change.

Courtesy photo

college semester spent in Kenya.

“I was mountaineering with the National Outdoor Leadership School,” she recalled. “It sparked my zeal for adventure and pushing the comfort zone.”

Starting out on her career, she taught rock climbing in California.

“It allowed me to help people every day to overcome fears and challenge themselves. I was hooked,” she said. “I then went on to roles like career services director and dean of educa-

tion, continuing my mission to serve people to discover and reach their potential.”

Lancaster said recent retreats she has led include those for the NAU vice presidents, The Yoga Experience, NAU Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, Coconino County Finance Department, doTERRA and the Coconino County Career Center.

There are a number of elements involved in the effort to become a better leader, including

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putting your heart in the game and having both passion and compassion.

“Care about what you do and the people you impact,” Lancaster explained. “If you do, it will also be natural to seek out feedback and make efforts to continuously grow.”

It is also important to look back and then move forward – a combination of reflection and action.

“Knowing isn’t half the battle,” she said. “Knowing strategies for time management, better meetings or effective teams is worthless unless you put them into practice. And being intentional about growth is key.”

It is necessary to have concrete action steps, and to focus on just one or two goals at a time to bring about positive, lasting change.

“Share your goals with others so that you can enlist cheerleaders and accountability partners along the way,” she added.

Above all, focusing on what is working can strengthen leadership skills.

“Success breeds success,” she said. “It’s important to not neglect this. Oh yes, don’t forget sleep and laughter.”

In addition to retreats that Lancaster facilitates for organizations, two times a year, she hosts retreats in Flagstaff that are open to the public.

“They are for women specifically, in a series that supports professional growth,” she explained.

An example of this is the one-day leadership retreat for 30 women on Feb. 28 at the Kilted Cat in Flagstaff, where the motto is “Reflect. Connect. Rejuvenate.” The goal is to assist participants in tuning up their relationships with

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– Julie Lancaster

concrete strategies.

Through both empathy and assertiveness, retreat attendees learn to be more skillful in having some of the more difficult conversations and to communicate expectations in a way that gets results.

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Lancaster’s role as retreat facilitator is demanding.

“My role is two-fold,” she said. “First, I create an environment that supports creativity and rapport. I inject ‘fun with a purpose’ through activities with the group’s specific goals in

mind. Goals range from increasing cohesion, to building trust, to communicating openly. I bring bins full of props, and sometimes we go the NAU Challenge Course and climb up on the 45-foot tower.”

The second part of her role is facilitating and mediating discussion about change and what steps to take to create change.

“The benefit from having a third-party facilitator is that I can say things and push people in a way that an internal leader can’t,” she observed. “They know I have no internal allegiances and that I have positive intent.”

Lancaster reported that responses to her last women’s retreat in 2015 were very positive, as gleaned from an exit inquiry, and included this response from Kristen Dick, a criminalist at the Arizona Department of Public Safety: “This Women’s Leadership Retreat was invigorating, empowering and fantastic. The retreat encouraged me to push my personal limits and challenged me to become my best self.”

In another response, Erin Widman, teacher and owner of The Yoga Experience in Flagstaff, called Lancaster a “dynamic, inspiring facilitator who brings in her own personal experience to foster participants’ ability to be vulnerable, honest and curious, yet draws out attainable plans, actions and results.”

There are many benefits to the retreat format, including working off-site.

“Being away from the work setting promotes fun and creativity – breaking out of old patterns,” Lancaster observed.

Through these retreats, attendees work toward

living their best life.

“We’ve only got one, so why not work to make it the best one we can?” she said.

Also, the off-site setting makes it easier to be vulnerable.

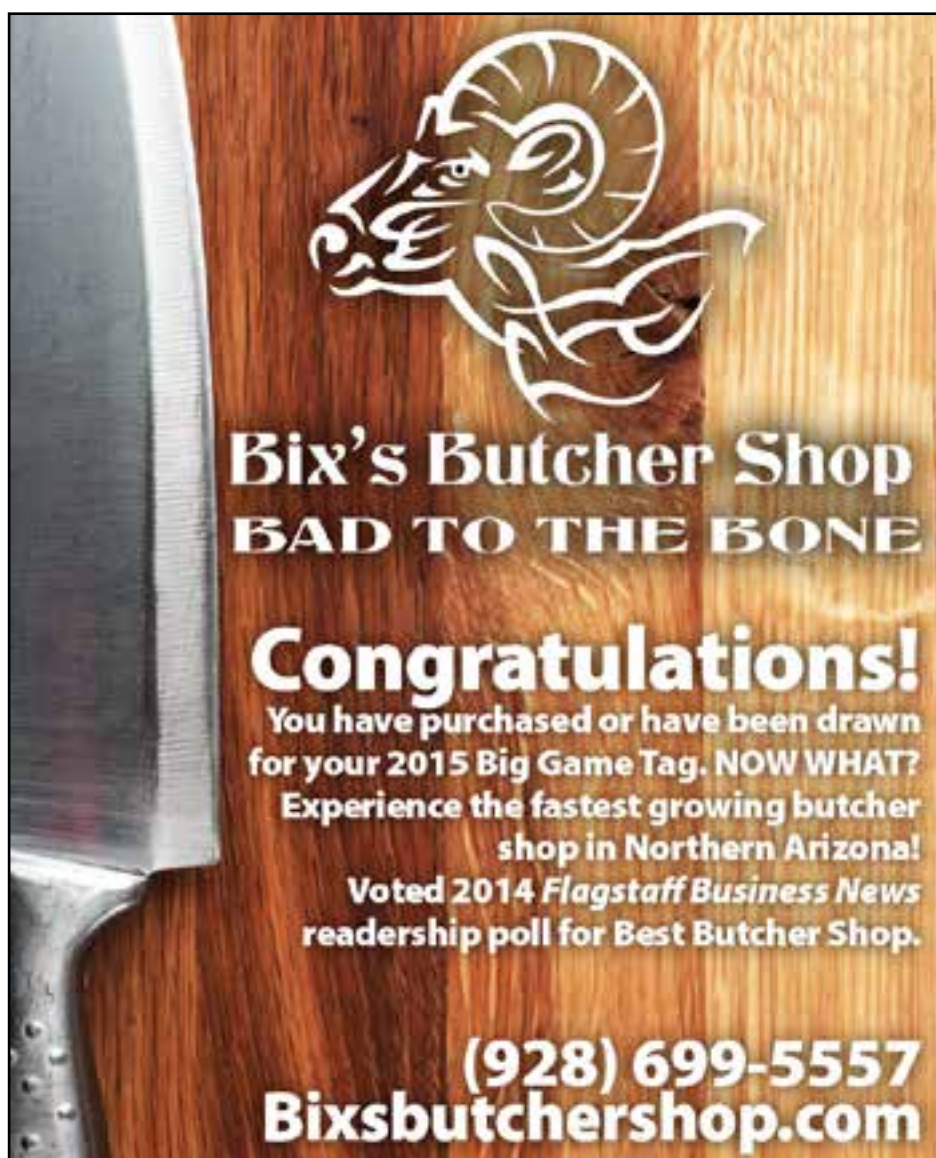
“Everyone is working on themselves,” she noted. “The stories people share and the connection/bond people share is remarkable.”

Lancaster also works with statewide organizations, including the Arizona Association of Perioperative Nurses, Arizona Fiduciary Association, Arizona County Clerks Association and North Country HealthCare. She has had many memorable experiences as a consultant, including while doing a workshop at Arizona Snowbowl.

“A supervisor said, ‘I just got to know more about my coworkers in the last five minutes than I have in the last five years,’” Lancaster remembered. “I get invigorated by helping people connect on a deep level.” **FBN**

To find out more about services and events offered by Julie Lancaster and her consulting business, visit the Facebook Page: Lancaster Consulting for Authentic Leadership <https://www.facebook.com/LivingAuthenticLeadership/?fref=ts>.

Contact her at www.LancasterLeadership.com or 928-607-2041.



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