

# THE LEADER

The official newsletter of the African Nutrition Leadership Programme



**Servant leadership**

**Taking the Hands of Others**



April 2017 | Issue 1





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# Foreword

BY CHRISTINE TALJAARD

## Perspectives

In 2012, I stepped into the ANLP family for the first time. As many before and after me, I did not yet comprehend the impact that being a part of this family would have on me. In the past five years, I have had the most amazing privilege to play a role in the personal growth of individuals from countries across the continent. I have the honor of being embedded within a functional network where I can actively contribute to and receive from. I have had the pleasure of constantly forming new relationships that continue to form me as a person, a better person. I experience the joy of warm ANLP greetings that welcome me wherever I might find myself in Africa. ANLP is truly a family, but it is a family with a purpose – to make our beloved Africa a better place for all of its people. I am sure that the majority of you reading this newsletter are familiar with the above experiences.

That being said, I personally believe that few things in life deserve to be the beginning and the end - the alpha and the omega. Not even the ANLP. I rather choose to see these gigantic impact moments throughout my years as steps in my life's journey. I guess I choose to have this view as I believe that it adds (realistic) perspective to life. *We don't live in an*

*ANLP world, but we live in a world where ANLP principles, values and lessons can and must be integrated daily.*

It is possible that your ANLP impact moment has truly been one of your greatest, but I sincerely believe that, as you continue walking on your growth path, there are many more impact moments awaiting you.

If I could share a word with each alumni for the year to come, it would be the words written by Saint Augustine below.

*People travel to wonder at the heights of mountains,  
At the huge waves of the sea,  
At the long courses of rivers,  
At the vast compass of the ocean,  
At the circular motions of the stars;  
and they pass by themselves without wondering.*

As we find ourselves time and again being amazed by the places that we have visited, and the wonders that we have seen, may we also recognize the wonder that lies within each one of us. May we appreciate the mentor standing in front of us, the friend walking beside us and may we serve those following us.

# Taking the Hands of Others...



*"Leaders, should influence others, in such a way that it builds people up, encourages and edifies them so they can duplicate this attitude in others." Bob Goshen*

## The Youth Inspiration

If you type "what does it take to be successful early in your career" into a search engine you may be slightly surprised. You won't find 'master degree' or 'first class honours' written in many places. What you will find are a list of personality traits; passion, commitment, drive, and a range of other skills including communication and the ability to function in a team setting. In many ways this isn't surprising. Organisations and companies hire young professionals based on who they are and not what they know. This is, however, somewhat contradictory to what we are taught in school and university. Today the need for academic accreditation is huge, more young people have bachelor and master degrees than ever before, and for many jobs these degrees are a requirement to even get your foot through the door. But it ends there and there is a distance between the door and the boardroom!

For countless young professionals, getting experience is a problem. Academic programmes do little to build and hone leadership skills or build the positive personality traits that drive success. Often,

graduating students leave university with a piece of paper that validates their technical knowledge, but does little to prepare them for success in the professional environment.

Like many, I started my bachelor degree with a focus on enjoying student life and getting good grades. My programme was a 4-year course that included a compulsory placement/internship year. At the time, this seemed like something of an inconvenience, especially after 3 months of unsuccessfully searching for a placement. Given little choice, I persisted and decided to make the most of the experience by applying overseas – out of my comfort zone! That saw me end up in The Gambia in a placement with the UK's Medical Research Councils International Nutrition Group. Although excited, I had little expectation of what I would get out of the experience or what to expect. And as an undergraduate, I'm sure that my arrival came with little expectation as to what I could contribute to their team.

I soon realised that I had stumbled upon an incredible opportunity. The opportunity to grow as an individual and as a professional. An opportunity that, those who created the

BY HENRY MARK AND JANE BADHAM

placement year no doubt knew, would be important in shaping the students. While I picked up some technical knowledge, my time there gave me an amazing platform to learn how to manage people and coordinate my own projects for the first time in my life, I learnt how to talk to people more senior and more junior than me but equally important, and to work with a wide range of people with different personalities and opinions. I now realise that the numerous supervisors during that year had an amazing sense of how much space to allow me, how hard to push me and the ability to recognise when I needed support. Without perhaps even knowing it, they were mentoring and shaping me as a young professional. Reflecting on that year I can honestly say that it was one of the most informative and influential of my professional life to date.

It's hard to overstate the importance of context when looking back on my early career experiences but if pushed to name only three things that have helped shape and define me as a professional it would be these:

1. The opportunity to make mistakes, and learn from them, in a professional environment where I was not expected to always succeed.
2. Access to inspiring mentors who knew when to let me run, when to give me a nudge and when to pull me back.

3. The opportunity to grow a diverse network of contemporaries, leaders and future employers.

I'm still growing and learning. I recognise it is a life long journey, but my experiences have grown a passion within me to help others to have similar opportunities. Especially others who are less fortunate than me – who do not have a compulsory placement year, do not have a mentor, or might not get an internship.

Hence the concept of the Youth Nutrition Network was born.

This is a network to take individuals with nutrition competencies and provide internship and mentoring opportunities and environments in which they can develop their potential. In this way, we can empower them towards reaching their potential to be part of the solution to the many and diverse challenges we face in global nutrition.

## The Experience of the Inspiration

The ANLP has always had as its vision the development of future leaders in the field of human nutrition in Africa. In its fifteen-year history, it has grown and expanded and even exceeded its own expectations. Providing nutrition professionals, and those

clearly linked with our work, with important skills outside of the direct nutrition scope is at the ANLPs core. Why?

In life, often it is not only what you know about your topic that is key, but equally important are a range of other skills. Other, often neglected or underestimated, skills such as: the ability to communicate; to work in and lead diverse teams; to show initiative etc... Universities tend to focus their attention on nutrition competence. We are taught to understand prevalence and p values, but not return on investment or to explain our 'ask' to others in a succinct 1 minute elevator pitch – aptly named because the individual we are most in need of reaching, we will probably only get to speak to if we bump into them (planned or unplanned) in an elevator as they race from meeting A to meeting B! In this 'elevator situation', there is no time to present the theory of change, the rationale for doing the research, the full methodology and methods – you get what I am saying? You need to tell them, in that one precious minute, what the issue is, what they should do and what's in it for them (getting re-elected, saving children's lives). You need to make it memorable because you can be sure that somebody else will demand their attention within the next minute.

### What is an elevator pitch?

- A short, pre-prepared persuasive speech that explains what you do and want, clearly and succinctly.
- It is used to spark interest in your organisation or idea.

- It should last no longer than 20-30 seconds – hence the name.
- It must be memorable, interesting and concise.
- It must explain what is unique about your organisation or idea.

I am reminded of a finance minister, who after taking 2 days to attend a nutrition financing meeting, said "I like your story, you've told me lots about 'stuff and science', but you have not convinced me as to why nutrition needs a budget line or what that line should read. Tomorrow I have a meeting with the HIV/AIDS group and the next day with a child protection organisation – then I will decide." In 2- days we had not convinced him!

### What does any of this have to do with ANLP?

The ANLP provides skills, or at least the awareness of the need for developing skills, that individuals and groups need to know in order to get the nutrition message across - who to talk to, how to reach them and how to talk to them so that they understand. We hope that through the programmes we run, we enable individuals to plan for 'the meeting' with the minister on their way from meeting A to meeting B and to devise how to powerfully use your 1 minute.

But just as the 10-day course is currently our most intensive offering and aimed at mid-career professionals - the leaders of tomorrow – we also know there is a need to upskill younger professionals while they are still training. We have to scale-up what we

do, just as scaling-up nutrition has become a buzz phrase.

Enter the idea of piloting the Youth Nutrition Network.

### Application of the Inspiration...

When approached by Henry Mark with his inspiring internship and mentoring concepts, it felt right to explore ANLP as the home of the Youth Nutrition Network. The concept is to identify young nutrition professionals, in their final years of training, and pair them with ANLP Alumni to truly mentor them and pass on the leadership skills that they have learnt. To achieve this, there are two other important requirements: firstly, to empower ANLP Alumni with a true understanding of the meaning and practice of 'mentoring'; and secondly, for the ANLP to work with organisations who commit to offer internships, providing the opportunity to network and experience the nutrition world in action while the young nutrition professional is still in training.

This is a very exciting shift for ANLP. During the 2017 ANLP, one of the Committees was called the 'Mentoring Workshop Committee', ably mentored by Christine Taljaard from the ANLP organising team, and Sergio Teixeira of the SUN Movement

Secretariat. The Committee planned a workshop during the ANLP that explored mentoring and led to interesting discussion and debate. Two key take home messages were:

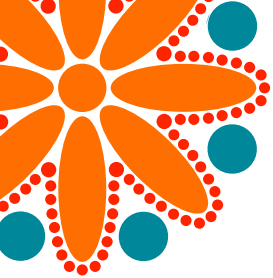
1. The fact that the term mentoring is used far too loosely. In the context of what the ANLP wants to achieve, a clear definition and understanding needs to be developed. Simply being a student's thesis supervisor does not necessarily constitute mentoring. Neither does having casual conversations about an individual's career path.
2. Mentoring down (to those earlier in their career) and being mentored up (by those further along in their career) are both important and encouraged by the ANLP, but we need to consider the characteristics and needs of both for this to be done effectively.

We will be taking up these challenges in 2017 and we urge you to share with us your thoughts on mentoring, experiences, lessons learnt, and how you believe the ANLP can support the development of an Africa-wide nutrition mentoring network for students in training. Drop an email to [jane@jbconsultancy.co.za](mailto:jane@jbconsultancy.co.za). Also, watch this space in future editions as we share our mentoring learning experience and journey.

*"A mentor empowers a person to see a possible future, and believe it can be obtained"* Shawn Hitchcock







# The anatomy of an effective team

BY JOHANN JERLING

A lot has been written about what makes an effective team. In this issue of The Leader I would like to share my personal experience of the African Nutrition Leadership Programme Support Team. For the past 15 years, I have had the privilege of being part of the team that has created an environment within which ANLP participants could experience personal growth and start a journey of self-discovery. For many years, I have taken the performance of this remarkable team for granted. However, during the past few years I've noticed how participants and new members of the ANLP Support Team have commented on the positive way that we interact to achieve our goals. It has been, without a shadow of a doubt, the most positive and exciting team experience that I have had to date. So what makes this such a good team?

Each year, a small core team does the bulk of the preparatory work and then a larger multinational volunteer team assembles for the 10 days of the ANLP to support the participants. There are probably a large number of critical success factors in this team<sup>1</sup>, but if I had to describe our key driver

for success, I would say "This **diverse team is committed to a purpose beyond each individual's self-interest and we enjoy what we do.**"

The most important characteristic of the team is that we have a very clear shared **purpose that goes beyond each member's self-interest**. Our purpose for being together gives us a common focus and provides us with the energy to achieve the goal. There is a very strong sense of shared responsibility and, despite roles and responsibilities being assigned, our assignments only serve as a starting point - a minimum expectation that we have of one another. Each member is fully committed to do what is necessary to achieve our goal without being asked to do so. This shared purpose fosters trust and is an exceptionally strong driver for behaviour and our interaction within and outside of the team.

A second element that stands out for me is that we really **enjoy** what we do. Not only is there a sense of enjoyment that comes from fulfilling a purpose, but it also comes from the humour we share and from simply creating an environment within which we

can all enjoy what we are doing. Being part of this team is always a strange and complex mixture of giving and receiving and the end result is enjoyment. We enjoy serving, giving, sharing, caring, and we learn and grow in the process. There is a child in all of us and many of us have managed to hide that beneath layers and layers of seriousness that we consider appropriate as professional people. We have grown used to the idea that work needs to be serious all the time but, as a team, we remind ourselves of Rule #6 - do not take yourself so seriously.

There is a certain amount of continuity in the team though we strive to have a 40% member turn-over each year. The **diversity** in the team is, in my opinion, the third important element for success. We have different personalities in the team - quiet people, loud people and team members with different world views. We have team members with a wide variety of team roles: we have members who pay attention to detail; members who keep us focused on the end goal; members who remind us of the process; members who push us to complete; and members who generate

new ideas. We also have members from different technical and professional backgrounds, with differing abilities to network and communicate. The one element that we have in common is that *we all lead from where we stand* and we know how important that behaviour is for delivering the team's mission.

The fourth critical element is **commitment**: commitment to the development of leaders in nutrition in Africa; commitment to the growth of individuals; and commitment to creating the kind of environment where individuals can grow and discover. I often think about what the ANLP Support Team does, how we: know what to do and how to do it; enjoy what we do; and continually focus on the purpose of what we do. This engenders a deep commitment to serve all those individuals who are set on the life-long journey of personal growth - those who will take up the challenge to do what they can, with what they have, where they are - those who will lead from where they stand.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Lisa Ware to this article.

<sup>1</sup> MICKAN S. AND RODGER S. 2000. Characteristics of effective teams: a literature review Australian Health Review, 23(3)201-208. Available on the web at <http://tlemerrill.pbworks.com/w/file/attach/85213915/Mickan%2520and%2520Rodger%2520-%2520Characteristics%2520of%2520Effective%2520Teams.pdf>



# Servant leadership

BY LEON COETSEE

*"What wisdom can you find that is greater than kindness?"*  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau

One tends to remember an *"ah-ha moment"* – that moment when an insight of significant importance dawned upon you. One such moment was when I realised that, in spite of the big difference between leadership and management, their end purpose is exactly the same: **To make your team members successful!** This implies a further important insight: **You as a manager or leader are only as successful as your team members are successful.**

Benjamin Disraeli once remarked: *"The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches, but to reveal to him, his own"*. This statement sums up the essence of the *"Servant leadership"* concept and what *"Servant Management's"* focus should be: **to identify, unlock and help realise the potential of people** you lead or manage.

One of the most momentous contributions one can make to the life of another person is to help him or her to find meaning in life. Teenagers seeking life's meaning immediately come to mind, though it is crucial for people of all ages to live a meaningful life and gain inspiration from this. This also holds true for older people who often lose their sense of meaningfulness when they retire from working.

Employees who tend to procrastinate, who experience job dissatisfaction or are apathetic about their work and jobs, often find what they do at work as merely routine activities, uninteresting and unchallenging. However, not everyone knows how his or her work activities contribute to end goals. The story about the former US president John F Kennedy's interaction with a manual labourer is worthwhile sharing in this context.

One of, if not the, most important goal Kennedy strived to realise during his presidency was to put a man on the moon. He paid visits to all the organisations involved during the early part of his presidential term. After spending several hours in discussion with management, scientists, technicians and astronauts at NASA headquarters, Kennedy was in the process of leaving the main building when he came across a man pushing a cart with buckets, brooms and other cleaning equipment - one of the cleaning staff. He walked up to the man and asked him what his job is. The answer came immediately: *"Well Mr. President, I'm helping to put a man on the moon"*.

Getting buy- in into this long term vision and obtaining all employees' alignment and commitment to the vision to the extent that it became a personal purpose, gave all

employed there a sense of belonging. More importantly, it gave them a strong sense of purpose.

Leaders and managers, who often handle instances where people are discouraged and distressed, do not always realise that these situations offer opportunities to help these individuals find meaning and purpose in their work. Because our experience of quality of work life to experienced quality of life, facilitating people to find purpose in their work often increases these workers' life enjoyment.

The key to facilitate the process of finding meaning is to never tell or instruct the person what they should think or do, but to guide them to find the answers themselves. The most effective way to do this is by asking guiding questions, such as:

- How (as what and where) do you see yourself in three years' time? When the answers to this first question is vague, it is important to continue with follow up questions e.g.
- What is important to you in your work and life?
- What is your greatest wish or dream in life?
- What should the results or outcomes of this dream be?

When ideals or end purposes have been identified in this way, the next step is to help generate a commitment and positive focus on the ideal, by again asking questions:

- What do you plan to do to achieve this?
- What is necessary to achieve this?
- What else can one do to realise this goal?
- Shouldn't one also consider..?
- How can one ensure that this stays a

top priority and receives your constant attention?

- What are the most important milestones along the way?
- What will be the most important indicators that will tell you that you have achieved your goal?

To help other people to find meaning in life and work is very often the key to unleashing their potential and is, as we have noted above, the essence of what is today known as servant leadership.

A servant leader and manager's role is firstly to make team members successful by: encouraging their growth and development; empowering them with the required knowledge, skills and experience; and providing the necessary resources to enable them to achieve goals and be successful. Another purpose of servant leaders is to grow more leaders. The foundation of the servant leader's role is the belief that *"I am as successful as they are successful"*.

## Summary:

- A significant kind of caring is to help a person find meaning in work and/or life and support them to be passionately committed to steps to find meaning.
- This process can be facilitated by asking questions and not by prescribing how to think or behave
- This empowerment of people is based on the principles of servant leadership: to be service orientated in exercising managerial and leadership roles and thus be instrumental to contributing to the enrichment of people's lives.



## 2017 Participant testimonies

# Being the change

BY CORNELIA CONRADIE

In the days which have passed since I attended ANLP 2017, I found it particularly difficult to explain my experience to friends and family. I know that something about me has changed – but how and what I cannot put into words. It's as if I feel capable of doing absolutely anything, a feeling I'm sure many of my fellow ANLP 2017 alumni share.

Being back at work is also different. Here too, I can't quite point out what it might be, but my 'aha' moments during ANLP, those flashes of sudden insight, have definitely changed how I view things. One of the questions I am now struggling with is '*why do I do what I do?*' During one of the ANLP sessions it was mentioned that we often lead others in the same ways as our leaders have led us. I guess this is true for most of what we do, as we copy how we see others do things. Often because we don't know

any better, or rather, because we don't know that we can actually do things differently. This is especially true with regards to how I train my dietetic students. I train the students as I was trained (as I am sure many others do). Perhaps this method of teaching is not effective, explaining why I have felt incapable of addressing my community's nutrition needs when I was still practicing as a dietitian. And the question is then whether my students can address the nutrition problems in their communities.

A comment made during a session gave me one of those 'aha' moments: that each individual should have a vision towards which they live. We often 'live' or operate to serve the organisation's vision, and in doing so, neglect our own vision. As a matter of fact, our personal and professional vision should align with that of the organization, and visa versa.



I know that change is needed in my life – both in personal and professional areas. During a discussion with one of the support team members of ANLP 2017, I was given the advice to choose only a few key things at first which I would want to change, and to make those changes. I have chosen my few, and one is now having a vision for my life. I want to encourage my fellow ANLP 2017 alumni to identify their areas of change and to follow this through. The going will get tough, but by keeping to this we will start to impact the lives of those around us. Together we will cause a ripple effect which will improve nutrition for all in Africa.

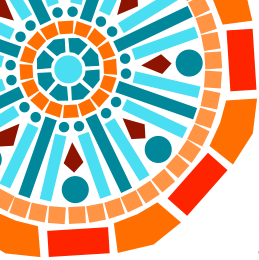
I then also want to urge the ANLP alumni from previous years to revisit their 'aha' moments during ANLP, and to examine the changes you have already made. While I commend you for these changes, I also

want to ask you to continue being the change as the ANLP 2017 alumni look to you for encouragement and motivation in how to be the change in that moment where we all find ourselves.

'We, the ANLP 2017 alumni, commit to boldly lead from where we are, using our network to advocate with passion, for evidence-based change to improve nutrition in Africa for all.' ANLP 2017 Declaration







## 2017 Participant testimonies

# ANLP: not just another one of 'those' workshops

Coming to the African Nutrition Leadership Programme, I must confess I didn't think it would be so different from past training sessions. Having attended a number of training sessions and workshops before, I expected the usual: - sitting in a classroom from 8am to maybe 4pm; a little bit of group work here and there; lots of time to socialize; and one or two late nights working on assignments. I was pretty smug and content with my expectations, so off I went to another one of 'those' training sessions.

On the very first day, this expectation was thrown out of the window as it quickly became apparent that this was definitely NOT a 'usual' workshop. This was something fresh and new; with a unique programme designed to build leadership. Before I go into details, I want to congratulate the facilitators. Their passion and enthusiasm were infectious. The way that they combined theory and practice was commendable so that, in the end, everything made sense. I met a very

professional, highly skilled group and formed networks that will last a lifetime.

The ten day itinerary was packed with activities, games, lessons, chores and, of course, many fun moments. The message was clear; leaders must not be overwhelmed with challenges but must have the agility to juggle many conflicting roles while also having fun and enjoying all of this. One big lesson that will always stick with me is: *you can lead from where you are*. I used to think leadership was reserved for the few who were brave enough to venture out into the murky waters and willing to make sense out of the chaos. I thought leaders were born and that is why only a few individuals can lead successfully while the rest can or should follow. I learnt that anyone can be a leader and it is important that we lead from where we are in order to make a difference.

The nutrition community in Zimbabwe right now needs more bold leaders. This is an exciting time to be a nutritionist in Zimbabwe

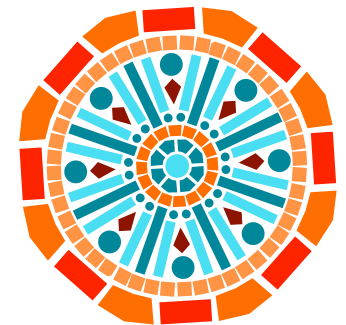
BY PROSPER KUJINGA

as nutrition is high on the political agenda and receiving the highest attention it has ever received. In the current economic blue print, crafted as part of the country's development agenda, the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET) has food security and nutrition as one of the four key focus areas to attain sustainable socio-economic transformation. Our visibility and our voice, at the leading edge of nutrition, is required now more than ever to contribute to national development. This is where the skills in team building, communication, advocacy and lobbying (all learnt at the ANLP) will really come into play. The ANLP brought out the leader in me and, in the words of our declaration, I commit to **'boldly lead from where I am; using my network to advocate with passion, for evidence-based change to improve nutrition in Africa for all'**.

Another important aspect of the ANLP were the lessons in mentorship. I believe the key to success in any field is the presence of a

mentor and a willing mentee. I learnt that you can be a mentor to someone and, at the same time, you can also have a mentor. We all have a role to play in building each other up. In the words of the Nigerian writer and poet, Bamigboye Olurotimi, "we must desire to see people rising in life, rather than looking for ways to contribute to their fall."

Lastly, as leaders, we must take responsibility for our actions. Sadly most of our leaders like to play the blame game, focusing on the external locus of control and blaming outside forces for everything. We must be leaders with a difference and have a strong internal locus of control; believing it is us that can influence events and their outcomes.



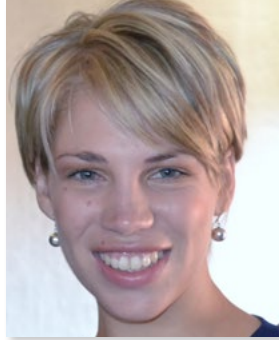


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