

# Small Business STORYTELLER<sup>TM</sup>

Volume 2, Issue 1

CHAMPIONING LOCAL SMALL BUSINESSES & ORGANIZATIONS

January 2005

## Leadership IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS



Precision Mailing's  
Larry Feil



The Gullah/Geechee  
People Foundation's  
Carlie Towne



The Roman Team  
of Prudential  
Carolina Real Estate

**L**eadership is so critical to businesses and organizations that nearly all of the nation's top business schools offer some kind of in-depth leadership program designed specifically for executives. It doesn't really matter whether you are a single member professional working from home or the CEO of a classic pyramid organization. Leadership has everything to do with the success of your business or organization. That's why the business stories in this month's *SMALL BUSINESS STORYTELLER* focuses on this topic. This article lists five practices of exemplary leadership, based on the research and writings of two of the nation's top leadership experts, James Kouzes and Barry Posner, in their book *THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE*. Ask yourself... how do you lead?

**1. CHALLENGE THE PROCESS.** How many times have you wondered why you had to do something that seemed to serve little or no purpose? Leaders find a way to properly challenge such processes, while followers are content to keep plugging away because "that's the way we've *always* done it." Entrepreneurs are classic examples of individuals willing to challenge the status quo, and, as a result, quite a few of these individuals end up in rather enviable leadership positions. Another way to describe this style of leadership is the ability to "think outside of the box." For example, a small manufacturing firm might encourage and reward individuals for finding innovative ways to reduce defects, which ultimately contributes to a net gain to the bottom line.

**2. INSPIRE A SHARED VISION.** How important is it to have a shared vision? Try asking a crew of builders to construct your dream home without sharing your vision of the finished product. It would be virtually impossible to achieve your dream. You must be able to convey a visual of the end goal or finished product or service of your business. This is necessary both to motivate your team and to ensure your client is satisfied with the end product. Many of you have surely heard the classic customer complaint, "But that's not how I pictured it." Or how about an employee who says, "But that's not how I thought you wanted it." Blaming the customer or employee gets you nowhere. The challenge of a good leader is the ability to get others to

visualize what your plans or ideas hope to achieve in the end. If you are able

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Lowcountry Kindermusik's  
Carol Smith



Money Mailer's  
Nick and Cindy Greenberg



Summerville SCORE's  
Tom Black and Tom Barnes



Insty-Prints of Summerville's  
Sharon Laney

**What's your story?**



# EMPOWER

## 'Leadership Is A Circle'

Gullah/Geechee People Foundation & Carlie Towne Productions  
Elders Carlie Towne and Halim Gullahbemi

When asked to "visualize" leadership, most people think of a pyramid, or the classic top-down hierarchical organization. This is not the case with Elder Carlie Towne, who owns Carlie Towne Productions of Goose Creek and currently serves as the Minister of Information for the Gullah Geechee Nation. She and her husband, Elder Halim Gullahbemi, who is the president of the local Gullah Geechee People Foundation, see leadership as a circle in which their role is to empower a team of equals and help ensure they stay focused on the task at hand. Here is the unique story of Elders Carlie and Halim's mission to preserve, protect, and celebrate their culture.



Elders Halim Gullahbemi and Carlie Towne help to empower others.

The Gullah/Geechee People Foundation is a family-oriented, charitable foundation originally formed to preserve, promote, and protect the Gullah/Geechee culture. The term "Gullah" refers to the language that evolved from an infusion of different African languages along with English. "Geechee" means "descendant of Gullah." It is a dialect that evolved from Gullah and is a "creolization" of the original language. Historically, the Gullah language formed along the Southeastern coast by necessity, when various African tribes were enslaved and shipped to America. Elder Carlie explains that the Gullah Geechee Nation represents

the existence of the language and culture from Cape Fear, North Carolina, to Jacksonville, Florida, and 30 miles inland. In addition to the language, Gullah reflects the people, culture, land and cuisine.

"The Gullah Geechee Nation does a tour every year. We go to different places where the culture is still prevalent," notes Elder Carlie. "You can still find the culture alive. We put God first, pay homage to our ancestors, and celebrate the gift of today."

and celebrate the gift of today."

Elder Carlie explains that in July 2000, the Gullah/Geechee People declared themselves a national linguistic ethnic group, thereby becoming a nation within a nation with dual citizenship. Also at the time, Marquette

L. Goodwine, known as Queen Quet, became the first Queen Mother and Chieftess, serving as the national and international spokesperson. The Gullah/Geechee People Foundation first laid the framework for what is now the Gullah/Geechee Nation by coordinating community involvement in the creation of the Gullah/Geechee flag. The local foundation has approximately 100 members. As president and CEO of the local foundation, Elder Halim oversees a 7-point program designed to help the organization achieve its goals and objectives. The program includes the performing arts, arts and crafts, education, scholarships and awards, the Internet and media, productions and documentation, and health and nutrition (both Elders Carlie and Halim are vegetarians).

"Halim is an artist and [for example] has worked on the preservation, painting, and restoration of the historic Borough Houses in downtown Charleston," describes Elder Carlie.

*continued on next page*

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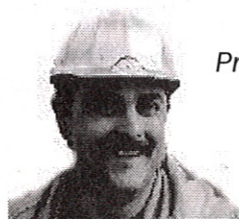
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## A Good Leader Creates Win-Win Situations

*continued from page 4*

"We have also performed plays for the Moja Arts Festival."

Elders Carlie and Halim also work with local schools to help children understand their culture. During school programs, they recite original poetry, sing and create songs with the children. Halim also makes replicas of instruments, such as the "shakerees," used years ago and shows them to the students.

"We are most proud of working with young people to encourage them to know about a shared culture. We want to let young people know that you can create from your environment. We encourage them to create, to sing, and write poetry," explains Elder Carlie. "We like to get feedback from the children."

Elder Carlie explains the importance of being a mentor as well as a leader. She credits Dr. Yussef N. Kly, Chairman of the International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, for mentoring and inspiring her work.

"Mentorship means leading by example," explains Elder Carlie. "It's a way of life."

Although the local Gullah Geechee People Foundation relies to an extent on donations of time and money, the organization is also funded through work performed by Carlie Towne Productions. For example, the production company produced "The Carlie Towne Gullah Geechee People Show," which aired previously on two local channels. Elder Carlie recalls the encouragement of her close friend, Lesa Wineglass, and husband to produce the show and film it from her own living room. While the company is in the process of negotiating another show, their business plans also include producing more plays and shows celebrating their culture. Elder Carlie and Halim are also in the process of establishing another organization, the Gullah Geechee Angel Network, whose primary focus is to preserve the Gullah Geechee culture by connecting people on a global level. According to Elders Carlie and Halim, the organization would be driven by sponsorship and possibly grants.

"This is for people who want to make a difference in the world," notes Elder Halim.

"We are looking for good projects as well as sponsors," adds Elder Carlie.

Elders Carlie and Halim sit on the

Council of Elders. Because of their work, both find themselves in positions of leadership. However, Elder Carlie is openly uncomfortable about the idea that she is anyone's leader. Instead, she regards her role as that of a facilitator. Elder Halim agrees.

"I want win-win situations. When I get with people, I try to become them, so I can understand and empathize with them. This makes me able to relate to them," she explains. "They become my family. That way, no matter what, we stay focused on the issue."

Elder Carlie further notes that she always holds her meetings in a circle. For this leader and Elder, it seems rather fitting.

For more information on the Gullah Geechee People Foundation or to become a sponsor, contact Elder Carlie Towne at (843) 572-6788 or e-mail ctowne@bellsouth.net.

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