

From **ROO** to You



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Special Edition

Leadership Lessons from Star Wars Celebration V

My family and I recently returned from Star Wars Celebration V in Orlando. I enjoy the films but I am not a hardcore Star Wars fan; thus, I approached this event with both a macabre fascination and a bit of trepidation. Would I enjoy three full days of star Wars? What on earth could I learn from 30,000+ Star Wars fanatics?

While I can't say I would return for the next Star Wars Celebration, the people watching was amazing and I did come away with some interesting observations of leadership that apply both in the Star Wars Universe and the business world. Enjoy...

Lesson #1: Quality is Essential.

More than ½ of the attendees were costumed each day – the quality varied and those with the best costumes posed for photos throughout the event. Members of the 501st Garrison, including my husband, are the only fans approved by Lucas Arts to represent Star Wars at public events. Why? The integrity and quality of the costuming. Each individual uniform must be approved to ensure the integrity of the brand and authentic representation of the uniform from a particular film. Heaven forbid you wear a plastic belt with your Episode 4 Storm Trooper uniform (everybody knows the belts were canvas....) Focus on quality in everything you do.

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Lesson #2: Differentiate Yourself.

The diversity of costuming and interests was truly impressive. There were specialists in droid building, tattooing, graphic arts and authors of Star Wars fiction. Each of them clearly differentiated their character or skills within the entire universe of Star Wars. There were also uniquely decorated storm trooper helmets auctioned off to benefit Make-A-Wish Foundation. How will you differentiate yourself each day?



Lesson #3: Find Common ground.

As I already mentioned, I am not a Star Wars fanatic and I have no idea what my husband and his friends in the 501st were talking about half of the time. It required both time and effort to find commonalities, but with a bit of effort I learned about others' families, interests and careers beyond star wars. It was worth the time. When you think you can't find anything in common with someone, make an extra effort.

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Lesson #4 Be Polite.

I didn't run into one rude personality or fan during the entire celebration. The A-list, B-list and the tangentially involved were all polite and engaged throughout the event. I met the young man that played the young Boba Fett in Episode I. He wasn't behind closed doors or on a stage – he was simply moving equipment and proactively reached out to say hello and inquire if we were enjoying Celebration. Likewise, I ran into Anthony Daniels, who played C3PO toward the end of the day while he was on his way out. I am sure he was a bit tired after 2 days of Celebration and being one of the primary characters in demand. Not expecting him to stop, I simply said, "Mr. Daniels, I really enjoyed your performance during Star wars in Concert." Rather than say "thanks" and keep walking, he took the time to stop, offer an authentic thank you and ask questions of me regarding where I saw the show. It took less than a minute of his time to engage with me and be polite, but left a lasting positive impression of Mr. Daniels. It doesn't cost you anything to be nice, and those around you take notice of how you treat others above, below and alongside you.



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Lesson #5: Be a team Player.

It is both possible and important to differentiate yourself while still remaining a team player. Fans from different countries and groups collaborated throughout the event in events such as a Walking Wampa on Parade. Tattoo artists and celebrities dedicated their time and creativity to donate custom-made skateboard decks and storm trooper helmets to benefit Make-A-Wish foundation. My own hubby won the bid for the WW bomber helmet below, marrying his love of Star Wars and military history.



Lesson #6: Laugh at Yourself. One of the most amusing events at Celebration V was the Storm Trooper Olympics. The uniforms are not very flexible, making it difficult to see and impossible to sit down when in full armor. The troopers put themselves out in front of everyone, competing as teams to shoot character cut outs with NERF guns, participate in an Ewok Toss, navigate a ropes course and maneuver an obstacle course on a Segue. It was hysterical.



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If you have ever worn a costume or said something embarrassing during a meeting, you understand the discomfort that can accompany “costume dysfunctions”. When these things happen, be able to laugh at yourself instead of worrying about what others think.

Lesson #7: Know Your Own Voice.

The best session was “Behind the Microphone”, a panel of the voice actors for the Clone Wars cartoon. The range and skill of each actor was impressive. One actor, James Arnold Taylor, plays Obi-Wan Kenobi, but also performs an amazing range of characters from Michael J. Fox to Fred Flintstone. Check out some of his vocal impressions on his website: <http://jamesarnoldtaylor.com/jamesarnoldtaylor.com/Videos.html> Despite his many talents, his key message to “know your own voice”. Until you know who your authentic self is, you cannot effectively commit to your organizational role and how it is similar to, or different from, others. Dee Bradley Baker, the voice of all the clones and a variety of interesting robot sounds talked about how each clone had his own voice. Even though they were on the “same team”, each had slightly different mannerisms, tone of voice and interests.

Lesson #8: Love what you do.

Dave Filoni, the Director of the Clone Wars Cartoon is a huge Star Wars Fan. During his presentation you could see in his eyes, hear in his voice and his laughter, the pure joy he has in his job. The next day, he was in the family room teaching kids how to draw Star Wars characters. This was apparent throughout the celebration. While you may not get to direct cartoons for a living or talk to George Lucas, find a way to love what you do every day.

With these lessons in leadership in mind.....let the force be with you...always.

For additional support developing leaders, or just to review some more interesting photos from the event, contact Kelly www.roosolutions.net