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THE ECO-FRIENDLY SKIES

How Empowerment Is Taking Off At American Airlines

It is difficult these days to find anyone in business who will argue against the importance of leadership, and the impact it can have on motivating an entire organization to strive for quality and excellence. The jargon of '90s business is filled with references to organizational attributes that stimulate individuals throughout a company to act like leaders, perhaps even like owners. "Flexible organizational networks." "Top-down, bottom-up leadership." "Holistic thinking." "Cross-functional teams." These are among the many buzzwords filtering through companies these days. And while the management trends on which they travel may come and go every few months or years, the essential principle remains rock-solid: companies in which leadership and authority are

spread throughout the workforce are the most committed and productive.

Heather Bell has shown her employer—and all of us—how all of this works.

Three years ago, Bell, an American Airlines flight attendant, got fed up with the waste onboard aircraft. "When you become a flight attendant I think the first thing you noticed at that time was the amount of food and material that comes onboard the aircraft and the amount that ends up in garbage cans," she explains. "We have very small garbage cans, so you're very aware of what you're trying to jam in there. It became very obvious to me that something should be done."

Beginning with a small-scale project at her home base at San Jose International Airport, and with the approval of airport management, Bell enlisted others' help to collect aluminum cans. "I asked the flight attendants to take the cans and bag them separately. I asked cabin service personnel to help by taking them off the aircraft and to the recycling bin. And I asked a recycling company to come and pick it up." Then she sent out messages via electronic mail to American's other 17,000 or so flight attendants. "I spent a lot of time at the airport running up to planes and talking to the flight attendants: 'Have you heard about our recycling program? Did you recycle anything for us?'"

The program spread quickly to airports in San Francisco and Los Angeles. "I started getting calls from flight attendants all around the system, asking, 'How do we get this started at our airport?'" Which is exactly what I wanted to hear." An L.A.-based colleague, Jacki Graham, joined in. By Earth

Day 1990, 13 American Airlines facilities had joined the effort.

Just prior to Earth Day, Bell wrote American Airlines CEO Robert L. Crandall to tell him about the program. "I wanted him to know we were very proud of it, that although the program had been running just six months, we had already received one award"—the Mayor's Award from the city of San Jose. "I received a very nice letter back saying 'This was great, I didn't even know this was happening, and what can we do to

help?'" It was at that point that the program could be deemed a success.

The story goes on from there—about how the program, now chaired by Graham and fully supported by the company, has distributed \$80,000 from selling recyclables to a long list of environmental and social-service charities, and about the extensive media coverage and

awards from federal and state government agencies, as well as Bell's Recycler of the Year award from the Keep America Beautiful Foundation.

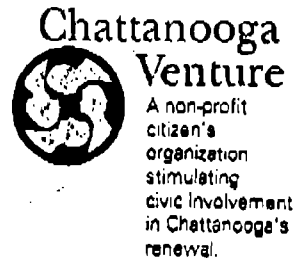
All of which reached a milestone last month, when American Airlines' flight attendants presented a check for \$200,000 to The Nature Conservancy, to be used to purchase environmentally endangered acreage within the cedar glades of middle Tennessee—not far from the Nashville airport. The area hosts the world's largest known colony of *echinacea tennesseensis*, the Tennessee coneflower. The daisy-like, purple flower has been found in only five places, all within 15 miles of Nashville.

Bell makes all these feats sound so easy: "I just took the approach that we would show them that we could do it." And she did.



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**EXAMPLES FROM CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE
FOR AL GORE'S SPEECHES**

July 21, 1992

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"The New Covenant" means a renewed relationship between people and their government. A relationship which promotes solutions to common problems with the collaboration of business, government and the vital civic and voluntary effort of citizens, committed to making a difference in their communities.

**LET ME GIVE YOU SOME EXAMPLES OF WHAT I MEAN FROM ONE CITY
IN TENNESSEE.**

In 1970, this city was declared the most polluted city in the country, and it was a fraction of the size of the larger industrial cities noted for air pollution. It was polluted by the outpouring of industrial emissions in a valley where the inversion factor concentrated the gases into intolerable proportions, so much so, that news articles carried stories of women's hose disintegrating during the day.

In 1990, this same city was declared the nation's best environmental turn-around story, by *Sports Illustrated* magazine. In fact, it is one of only five cities in the nation which have moved from the "Dirty Air List" to the "Clean Air List."

How did it do this? Because government, business and citizens worked together to solve what seemed to be an unsolvable problem. An Air Pollution Control Board was created and a strong commitment was made by the citizens of the area and businesses began to comply with the air pollution control standards set by the government. Together business, government and the commitment of citizens turned this city around, where today the people of that valley breathe fresh air and can see the beautiful mountains which surround them.

But that is not all. Let me tell you another story of this same city, a story about...

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A New Covenant With Local Government

In the early 1980s, this city was in despair. It was hit by the economic recession that hit many cities in America at that time, from which most of them have not recovered and are suffering today. The traditional industries were in decline, racial tensions were great, the schools were inadequate, the physical infrastructure of bridges and sewers were deteriorating and what is more, the social infrastructure -- those bonds of people working within their communities to make a difference -- had broken down. People felt hopelessness and despair against powers over which they seemed to have no control.

But these citizens did not give up. Instead they decided that the old traditional forms of government, making deals behind closed doors, was not working for them and they needed to open the doors and invite more people to the table to help solve their community problems.

So, the citizens of the area held a broad-based, citizen participation process, called Vision 2000, and asked thousands of people what they wanted their city to look like in the year 2000. What resulted were 34 goals for the city and a dramatic change in spirit of the city; a sense of hope overcame despair, a sense of commitment overcame apathy, and a sense of determination that if they were going to turn this city around, they couldn't wait for government to lead the way, they had to lead government.

What has this city done?

Housing:

In 1987, this was the first city in America to make a commitment to provide housing fit and livable for ALL its citizens, within a decade. To accomplish this, government funds, banks and philanthropic support were enlisted. Over 2,922 homes have been renovated or built in neighborhoods which are now feeling the effect of commitment to revitalization.

Educational Opportunities Without Racism

In 1988, with citizen pressure on the school board, a new public school was opened in one of the formerly closed and abandoned school buildings; a school that required parent involvement and delivered quality education to all students regardless of race or class or educational background. And with a 40-60 racial breakdown, it has dispelled the myth that race has caused the problem in America's schools today. This school has proven that leadership is the key issue, not race.

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Environmentally Sound Choices:

In 1989, the city opened the first phase of the Tennessee Riverpark, the dream of its citizens to turn the edge of the mighty Tennessee River into a public park, with hiking trails, fishing piers and public access to spectacular scenery and natural beauty. Again citizens led government to see its own wonders.

The list goes on, affecting every part of the community. . . . a family violence shelter, a human relations commission, a gun control ordinance, downtown revitalization, a more lively arts scene and in 1992, the city opened the world's first and largest institution dedicated to fresh water ecology, the Tennessee Aquarium, completely funded by private sources. A \$45 million structure is a monument to the commitment of the citizens of this area to turn their city around.

This city has declared environmental change as the area in which it most wants to excel. By creating a positive atmosphere for change among business, government and citizens groups, this city has cleaned up its air, preserved land and created public parks along vast areas of scenic and natural areas, started community gardens and neighborhood food markets in the inner city, and created a model recycling program which employs the handicapped and provides funds for their center.

In fact, this mid-sized city in Tennessee, once considered the most polluted city in America in the backwaters of the Tennessee River has completely transformed itself with a Cinderella story that would make any city proud.

I attended their first Environmental forum and used them as an example in my speeches in Rio. This city is Chattanooga, Tennessee.

But let me go a little further and let me be very honest about the role of federal government in this environmental turn around story.

What has EPA done lately, under the Bush administration to help communities like this? The administration that would not sign the international treaty also does not support the efforts of local citizens, citizens in our country who are trying to make a difference, who are trying to change the way things are done and bring environmental improvement to their own communities.

Chattanooga Creek has been declared by EPA to be one of the most polluted creeks in Tennessee. It is high on the EPA's list of superfund sites. By EPA's own standards, it is a priority.

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Because the citizens of this area are inclined toward finding positive solutions with the support of business, government and volunteer efforts, they identified a technology, using only biological approaches, that could clean-up this creek, including the toxic sludge which had been building on the creek bed for over one hundred years. This technology uses natural processes -- bio-organisms, plants and even fish and snails to turn polluted water into clean water in a short period of time. And what is more, the cost of this technology is one-tenth the cost of traditional methods. A fact that was appealing to the citizens of Chattanooga and should have been appealing to EPA.

This creek runs through an inner-city area, one that is primarily composed of low-income, elderly, and minority people. These people had been trying for years to call attention to the pollution in their neighborhood, but no one paid them heed. When city began to look at its whole environmental picture and when neighborhoods in other areas began to join forces, they realized they must begin by cleaning up the most polluted areas.

Neighborhoods from the area, officials of city and county government, and businesses along the creek have asked EPA's help. And what did EPA say to them in June of this year, at the same time that Bush was waffling in Rio -- **THEY DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY!**

EPA DOESN'T HAVE ANY MONEY. *Business Week* carried a story this spring that reveals why EPA doesn't have any money -- it has spent it all in litigation. Billions of tax payers dollars dedicated to cleaning up the most polluted sites in the nation-- and where has it gone -- to lawyers.

But this would not be the case in the story I have just told you. In fact, The businesses along Chattanooga Creek have even offered to match dollar for dollar what EPA puts into the project.

And what does EPA say? **THEY DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY.**

This is a disgrace. I want to see an Environmental Protection Agency that encourages and supports citizens in local areas who work with business and government to find positive solutions that work in their areas. I want to reward citizens like those in Chattanooga who have risen above the squabbling and fighting over whose to blame and settled down to getting something done.

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I would like to see the federal government use the funds it has allotted for super fund clean-up to those communities that come up with the most creative solutions.

IT CAN BE DONE! It has been done in one city in Tennessee. It can be done throughout the nation.

But it can only be done if we have the leadership at the top that has a covenant with its people. A Covenant that puts people first and seeks to promote that entrepreneurial spirit, not only in creating new jobs, but also in solving our very difficult social and environmental problems.