

STEWARDSHIP AND THE VALUE PRACTITIONER

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ABSTRACT

Value practitioners have a gift for recognizing value. We need to focus our gift on the world around us, beyond our job and project responsibilities. Reasons why we should be stewards of our world are discussed, including benefits to our lives, our communities, and our profession. Examples of such stewardship are presented, both from real life experiences of the author and other value practitioners and from a vision of what could be. Conclusions address the rewards which the value profession will reap when our expertise benefits the world around us.

INTRODUCTION

Value practitioners have a gift for recognizing value. We collect information, analyze the functions, generate creative ideas to satisfy the functions, evaluate to select the best ideas, develop those ideas, and sell the best ideas to the decision makers. Hopefully, we all are able to earn a living doing it. The question weighed here is should we value professionals be extending the scope lines of our application of this gift, which many people and organizations don't have, beyond our jobs.

Stewardship is the application of our gifts for the betterment of the world around us. The word is most often used in a Judeochristian context, e.g. 1 Peter 4:10, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Granted, in this context, the gift refers to salvation. However, the principle is the same for any God given talent, even a talent for recognizing value. We need to add the required secondary function of SHARE GIFT to the critical path of functions in our personal lives.

WHY SHOULD WE BE STEWARDS?

In addition to Judeochristian teachings, the reasons why we should SHARE.GIFT are many. Can we improve the world for our children and grandchildren? Can we make a difference that we can enjoy within our own lifetimes? Can we benefit our lives, our community, our profession, and, in the bargain, our business? The answer to all these questions is yes!

Undoubtedly, what our generations do in this world becomes a legacy for those who come after us. Our children, and our children's children, will inherit that legacy. We are professionals who can have an impact on the world around us. To keep this legacy worth inheriting, stewardship of the world becomes a duty for us all.

Stewardship will benefit our lives. We all have experienced the joy of giving. Giving material things is nice, but giving of oneself is even more rewarding. It follows that stewardship brings satisfaction and joy to your life. We also live in the world around us. If we help improve that world, we get to enjoy the improvements. Stewardship will definitely increase the quality of life for those who practice it and those around them. Finally, when our stewardship is in the form of sharing our gift of value, the monetary cost of life can go down. For example, if we help our local town reduce a project's cost, the impact on our property tax bill will also be reduced. These are all benefits that will accrue to a "steward".

Our community will benefit from our stewardship. Maximizing the value from community expenditures yields better outcomes from fewer dollars. The community gets better projects and has money to

spend on additional projects for which it otherwise may have had to wait several years to fund. This effect compounds the benefit to the community of value stewardship. Being able to complete additional projects sooner increases the quality of life in the community that much sooner. Even if you don't build anything else, reducing the cost of living in a community also improves the quality of life in that community. Either way, the community has been improved.

Stewardship provides undeniable benefits to our profession, which are many and varied. Those many volunteers, whether elected or appointed, who serve SAVE at either a national or chapter level, are stewards of the value profession. Through their efforts, a support system exists for all of us in the value profession, complete with SAVE conferences, *Interactions*, *Value World*, cooperative efforts with other professional societies, the SAVE bookstore, the consultant directory, etc. The volunteers serving on the CVS Board and the Miles Value Foundation are also stewards for our profession. These services benefit us all.

Our profession also benefits when we are value stewards in our communities. Such efforts improve the reputation of the value profession, creating good will and increasing its visibility. We need that increased visibility to expand our field and SAVE. Results published in community newspapers and/or trade publications act as free advertising for the value practitioner involved and the profession as a whole. Finally, we can gain more and varied experience which will serve us well in our future value endeavors and make us better ambassadors for our profession.

THE WORLD AROUND US

Where in the world (around us) can we be value stewards? With apologies to Carmen SanDiego, there are many opportunities in the world around us. Several of those opportunities are discussed below.

In the community where we live, there are ample opportunities for value stewardship. Hospitals and nursing homes have facility needs and are often operating under a budget crunch. Service clubs, such as Kiwanis and Rotary, are often involved in community service and fund raising programs. Charitable organizations, like the Salvation Army, Rescue Mission, YMCA (background music), YWCA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boys Club, Campfire Girls, and a myriad of health related charities, all raise funds and maintain facilities for headquarters, shelters, summer camps, etc. Religious organizations of all types have sanctuaries, meeting space, offices, and

summer camps that need to be funded, built, renovated and/or maintained. Finally, there are many local organizations built around various social issues who need facilities. All of these organizations offer us chances to be stewards, both as volunteers and value professionals sharing our gift to help them spread their limited funds farther.

The people we encounter every day in our communities also need our stewardship. In volunteer groups addressing all aspects of social concern, many of which are addressed by the above organizations, people are struggling with difficult decisions. Our value skills can help to reduce the stress of these decisions. We can apply function analysis to break their problems down into bite sized chunks. We can help them generate creative ideas and evaluate the ideas in a group setting to obtain consensus. After development of a recommendation, we can apply our presentation skills to help them sell the recommendation to their members and decision makers in the community. All we need to do is get involved.

A school district is an excellent source of opportunities to provide stewardship, ranging from serving on the many committees to actually becoming a school board member. Many districts have to obtain voter approval of their budgets every year. From time to time, they need new buildings or major renovations to existing buildings, due to increasing enrollments, the ravages of time, and/or new standards and mandates. Referendums must be approved by the voters. The skills of the value professional can help the district maximize the value of the taxpayer's dollar, thereby increasing the likelihood of voter approval. Difficult decisions are also very common in school districts and the value skills cited in the previous paragraph can be brought to bear in helping to achieve consensus.

Urban areas present many challenges that can benefit from the stewardship of value professionals, requiring all of our creative and value improvement skills. The concentration of people in urban areas tends to exacerbate the problems to be faced, especially in the large cities such as New York and Los Angeles. Traffic congestion, neighborhood decay, crime, mass transportation needs, aging of the infrastructure, and graffiti are just some of the challenges faced every day. More agencies have turned to formal value management in addressing these issues, e.g. New York City Office of Budget and Management and New York City Transit Authority. However, through value stewardship, we can spread its use to many more cities and agencies, and to the grassroots organizations that attack such problems

closer to the source. There is only so much money to go around and better decisions are needed as to where and how best to spend it, at both the grassroots and agency levels. This may present our greatest challenge as value stewards.

The environment also offers multiple opportunities and needs for stewardship. Keeping our environment clean and cleaning up the messes we as a society have already made are both enormous and costly tasks. Tightening environmental regulations have in some cases chased industry from communities disparately needing the jobs lost. How do we balance the need for enforcement with the need for jobs? It will take the kind of cooperation between state agencies, communities, industries, and environmental action committees that value stewards can help establish. As for cleaning up, the potential costs of restoring an Onondaga Lake in Syracuse, New York or a copper strip mining site in Wyoming are astronomical. Sharing our gift with the community groups and leaders struggling with these monumental tasks can help them prioritize and divide the tasks into pieces which can be successfully addressed. We can help move these problems, slowly but surely, to an eventual solution through value stewardship.

Finally, the aesthetic environment around us is ripe with opportunities for stewardship. Community art commissions welcome creative minds to help further their causes. There are other commissions dealing with local parks, museums, architectural standards, and even community beautification. The symphony, the Little League, the annual Fun Run organizers, and the local annual festival committee all are looking for volunteers to help them succeed, including how to get the most value from their funds. All these organizations deal with aesthetics, enjoyment of life, relaxation, and the general wonder of life. What better examples are there of where stewardship benefits others and the steward, too?

EXAMPLES OF STEWARDSHIP

The best way to explain stewardship is through examples. Presented below are a few real life examples, from value practitioners and others, and a few ideas on other ways to promote stewardship.

In 1989, the school district in which I live put forth a bold plan to renovate its nine, forty something buildings and expand them to meet growing enrollments and state mandates. The voters had asked the school board to stop "nickel and diming" them and come up with a comprehensive plan. The \$90 million plan went down in flames at the hands of these same voters. Being

a strong proponent of education, I had voted yes. When a committee was formed to go back to the drawing board, I volunteered.

The committee was 24 strong, a mixture of parent taxpayers (my category), teachers, district administrators, an occasional board member, and the district's architect. This contentious group labored for three years, looking at all angles. We continually sent recommendations to the school board only to have them bounced back for more study. The big battle was over the configuration of the elementary school grade levels, i.e. should they be K-4 or K-5. K-5, agreed by all to be best academically and championed strongly by the President of the teacher's union, would require additions at each of six elementary school. K-4, pushed (unfortunately at times) by me, best fit the available facilities and had been very successful in the district for years. Finally, I convinced the committee leadership to go through a detailed comparative analysis, identifying and weighing criteria and then creating an evaluation matrix. Reaching into my value toolbox, I facilitated two meetings which led to consensus on K-4 as the best value for the district and finally, acceptance of our recommendations by the board.

The rest of the story is my decision to run for the school board, out of frustration from the "bounce back" effect mentioned above. Elected, I've been able to introduce formal Value Management to the district. Our savings of \$2.1 million on a computer technology plan, and the publicity around that savings, helped the district pass the technology referendum 2:1, even though we had passed the first referendum in over 20 years just 8 months before. With seven buildings to go, the district needs to keep on this roll. VM has just been applied again to the conceptual design of a major high school renovation. Although the identified savings are a modest \$1.2 million, the rearrangement of what's new and what's renovated has led to a significant increase in state aid eligibility and subsequent reduced local share and taxpayer impact.

The stewardship of serving as an unpaid school board member for the last four years has been very rewarding. The camaraderie of the board, the homemade cookies in executive sessions, being able to hand your daughters their diplomas, and the vast learning experience are all a great benefit to my life. The value stewardship, from facilitating consensus to leading a VM team gratis, has added to my resume, is improving the educational life for my children and teacher wife, and has lightened my financial load as a taxpayer. The insights I've gained from both stewardship roles, on education and VM of educational projects, has opened doors for me

and the practice of my profession that I am only now beginning to explore.

Have you ever seen plants growing on the roof of an urban building? What an addition to the aesthetics of the city! One of the SAVE Fellows, Jim Hudson, has spent much of his life promoting this concept. Has he gotten large monetary gain from stewardship of this idea? No. Has he gained a huge sense of personal satisfaction? Please ask him about it the next time you see him and you'll see the answer as he lights up. After the Chicago SAVE conference, I rode the elevated train back to the airport. As we passed rooftop after boring rooftop and, being in that energized state that comes with attending a SAVE conference, I wondered why the Chicago Transit Authority doesn't hold a contest awarding lifetime free ridership to the homeowner next to the tracks who constructs the most interesting or attractive roof garden. Wouldn't that make the daily commute a lot more interesting? We as value professionals can make such suggestions and help them come to pass. Someone in Chicago - call CTA.

On the same train ride, I saw much graffiti, some attractive but most of it ugly. I thought of a similar contest for graffiti artists. What a pleasant surprise I found months later in the November 1996 issue of *Good Housekeeping*. On page 90, Redmond, Washington did it! Although not a contest, two police officers suggested to their Lieutenant that a Hip-Hop Art Wall be build to give graffiti artists a place to display their art where it did not offend the eyes of citizens. Space was located in a downtown park, local merchants donated materials, and ground rules were laid down. It has worked well to virtually eliminate unwanted graffiti and add interest to a local park. What a unique way to solve a problem. This solution would not have happened without stewardship of the idea by Lieutenant Gail Marsh and her team of officers. Would this work in your community? Make it happen!

While we're at it, how about vacant lots? You all have seen news stories on local neighborhoods turning a vacant lot into a park, playground, garden, or similar use. Contests could be held in any city, throwing a block party for the neighborhood that does the best job of cleaning up and putting a vacant lot to good use. All the concept needs is a steward in each city to make it happen.

There is a new and rather controversial program working its way across the country to put welfare recipients to work. There are questions of what work can these folks do without threatening the jobs of those

currently working. In New York City, one controversy centered around being sure newly hired street cleaners had proper winter apparel and work gloves to protect their hands. Another concern is for liability if one of these workers gets hurt on the job. These are all thorny issues that require creative solutions and the stewardship to help implement them. What can you do in your community to help leaders find functional jobs for those on welfare rolls that improve their sense of worth, add to the quality of life in the community, and help spread the limited financial resources of the community. This one is a real challenge which needs the kinds of minds in our value profession.

There is an example of stewardship of the environment that dates back to 1854. J. Sterling Morton had just moved to Nebraska. He saw settlements opening up and a lack of wood on the treeless plains for building materials and fuel. As stated in a special edition of *Arbor Day*, the official publication of the National Arbor Day Foundation, "Morton offered a solution elegant in its simplicity - Plant Trees. He envisioned prairies covered with flourishing groves providing firewood, fence posts, and lumber. Orchards would provide rich fruits and nuts to grace the tables of farmers and townsmen alike. In the shade of those trees and the acts of stewardship required for their care, the people of the plains would find comfort and fulfillment." He founded Arbor Day in Nebraska on April 12, 1872, on which a million trees were planted in the state. Now celebrated across the nation, Arbor Day remains as Mr. Morton's legacy of stewardship.

Many examples of stewardship can be taken from charitable organizations. We think of Jerry Lewis and the Muscular Dystrophy Association and Danny Thomas and St. Jude's Children's Hospital. Each of our communities have chairpersons for their local United Way campaigns. In your own area, you can identify countless others who give their stewardship to these excellent causes. There is much to be done and many hands make light work. With our value skills, perhaps our stewardship would be compounded by getting greater value from the fruits of others stewardship.

CONCLUSIONS

One conclusion of the above sometimes rambling discussion of stewardship is that the world can benefit more from value principles than it currently does if we widen our scope lines beyond our jobs. As a popular Eagles song tells us, we should "take it to the limit" in applying value stewardship to the other arenas of our lives. You can have an impact on the world around you,

as the examples of stewardship have shown, and that impact can be substantial.

A second conclusion is that the value profession will gain a better reputation as we all apply value stewardship to the world around us. It will be wider known that the value profession is full of good people wielding a mighty process. The visibility of the value process will be greatly enhanced by its success in stewardship applications. Even if all you do is volunteer and never bring your value toolbox into play, people will know by your stewardship that those value professionals are all right.

Finally, when the world around you benefits from your stewardship, you benefit, too. Increased quality of life, personal satisfaction, the joy of giving, improved surroundings, and reduced taxes are just some of the many ways you benefit. When you SHARE GIFT, whether it's value, your time, a smile, the grace of God, an idea, or whatever, the gift comes back to you tenfold. Stewardship is a win - win proposition.

Start winning today!