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This section is a new feature for our journal. In subsequent issues, recognized leaders in our profession will be asked to offer guidance for those just entering - the older generation passing the torch to the new generation of professors of middle level education. Our first selection comes from a gentleman who has a long and distinguished history.

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**Middle Level Education Professors—  
Suggestions for Gaining a National Reputation**

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A national reputation is like the shine on a classic old car. It looks good, it feels good, and it usually enhances the value of the commodity; but it can wear thin and tarnish easily, unless reinforced with constant work and the right substance. Just as any "argument" has its two sides, so there are two equally accurate sides to the argument of how to achieve a national reputation. The one argument is that a person starts out seeking the national reputation and does all that needs to be done to gain that image. The other logical argument that could be given is that the achieving of a national reputation happens by being in the right place at the right time. This author believes that both arguments are true. National reputation comes about through planning for that goal and by being provided the opportunities that will support that plan.

It is definitely not accurate that some are born to the role and others are not. The statement by Thomas Mann seems one of the most accurate for anyone seeking national reputation. "If any man seeks greatness, let him forget greatness and ask instead for

truth, and he will then find both," *On Achieving Greatness*. The author has had that statement on his wall for over ten years and has no need to doubt its wisdom or accuracy. Those who choose to tell others of cabbages and kings as a lifelong career must be in pursuit of the truth as the route to reputation.

In the beginning, the doctorate seems to be an anointing that carries with it a series of responsibilities that are taxing and bewildering. As the new professor begins to teach others in the arena of the university, he/she finds the audience to be tolerant of teaching style while in search of knowledge or applicable skills. How do you teach others as an authority of some sort about something? That anxiety soon gives way to a reality of the need to quote others or quote yourself to underscore a point so that your audience finds you presumably more accepting and helpful. In the beginning, new professors find that having written nothing, or very little, can make quoting oneself very difficult. So most novice assistant professors tend to quote others. Many believe that accurately using the work of others could gain acclaim for the presenter. However, this procedure really only serves one purpose, to allow the professor to find out what others think they know about his/her area of expertise. It does very little for the development of real academic pursuit.

The university has only one purpose: to provide conditions that will allow for thinking-a thinking that is free of bonds set by others who were there first. Thinkers have something to tell; copiers have something to sell. A person cannot make a choice he/she has not heard of. Thinkers tell of choices yet to be made. Communication appears to be the only real reason for human association. Persons with national reputations tend to communicate more, and in a more accurate manner, than do the sellers. If you have something of your own to communicate, people will listen. If you communicate better than others do, they will listen to you even more.

There seem to be nine major factors that support the development of a national reputation. The person seeking a national reputation has to be better than others in these nine (9) areas: (1) actively doubt the idea; (2) always debate the idea; (3) be

willing to be proven wrong; (4) write for anyone at any time-talk to anybody at any time; (5) stand for something; (6) set your own standards; (7) don't hurt anyone; (8) be available; and (9) love what you are doing with an insatiable passion.

(1) Actively doubt the idea. We were made to think; therefore, we should do it. Ironically, the first rule for gaining a national reputation would be to not buy on face value what someone with a national reputation is trying to sell, be it idea or product.. The doubts you present to the idea help you develop related ideas for yourself.. Doubt allows for innovation of an idea. The value of your thoughts is no less than that of the authorities' thoughts, if conceived honestly and accurately. Very few national reputations are built on parroting others' ideas. The audiences that seek you out can rehash old ideas on their own and by themselves. Attack of a premise or proposition for attack's sake is not the answer, either.. Challenge the conditions of the information. Look for prejudice in the author, and you will find how to protect yourself from a similar human error.. Tolerance for turbulence is sometimes a phrase attached to the curriculum environment. It fits very well in the arena of academic investigation. Thinking is uncomfortable, the authority is an uncomfortable person, and many times that trait will make those near him/her uncomfortable. Disequilibrium is the beginning of real inquiry.

(2) Always debate the idea. Try to find the sub-components of an issue. Those who can simplify an issue by seeing the basis for the conflict or the challenge will always surpass in value as a speaker those who are swept up in any emotions that may be tied to the issue and, therefore, grounded in the status quo. The idea, the cognition, is the issue. A national consultant can come in from outside the local issue allowing the people who want you to work with them time to walk away from the frustration and the fatigue of approaching solutions. A consultant's responsibility is to not let his/her audience abandon the idea they want help with. The consultant must keep bringing them back to the idea from a different prospectus. Your constant pursuit as an authority makes you an asset to those who have given in to the problem. You will be sought out because of your

persistent engagement of the concepts and problems that have bogged down those who have the problems. Audiences tell other audiences of your tenacity, and it becomes a sought after element. The nation oftentimes forms a collective solution to an issue. National reputation comes from totally understanding an issue and then understanding the local constraints on the solutions. The national consultant must have a prospectus of the problem in relation to the total of the idea. It is the consultant's responsibility to approach the problem with less baggage than those who are tied down by the realistic constraints that may not allow them to think objectively. This approach allows for establishing partial successes in different parts of the nation that can be brought to any one particular situation as a possible solution. The wise consultant is learning while teaching.

(3) Be Willing to be proven wrong. If the search for truth is your goal, then there is no absolute right or wrong, only the situation of more effective and less effective ideas, which contribute to solutions. And, if this search is conducted with integrity, then the solution will be a truthfully honest one. A fear of good national consultants is to believe an idea to be accurate, given that they have accumulated the data that designed a solution as being accurate; present it as a feasible solution to a major concern; and then find that the recommendations they have made have caused the situation to worsen. And the worsening was the fault of the consultant. The group trusted his/her judgment, in part, because of the national reputation. Certainly the way to protect against this is to have the materials, solutions, or concepts reviewed by peers. But when you are the leading inquirer, the review process may take a while or, in itself, be faulty or inaccurate in duplication or distorted because of missing elements. At all times integrity must support the consultant's actions. No other justification is acceptable. The people you serve create your national reputation. It takes a very long time to establish. It can be erased quite rapidly. It must be guarded by constant self inquiry. In some cases, a searching for challenges that will help prove your point is valid. Invite and cause peers to review your material.

(4) Write for anybody at any time-talk to anybody at any time. While an assistant professor in his second year of university employment, the author asked the most published person in the college how he ever acquired that status. The author asked him at an after-hours get together at a major convention in Chicago. Those circumstances may be the only type that truly allow freshmen and senior professors to exchange real thoughts on equal terms. The author will always remember this full professor's answer, and it has proven to be accurate counsel.. He said, "I write for anybody any time they want me to. I'll write for the back of matchbook covers, if somebody allows me to." The author would pass on to anyone who has read this far this sage advice. The author has spoken to "groups" of two and well over 2,000. He has spoken on radio, TV, and teleconference set-ups. He has spoken to highly interested, partially interested, and hostile, disinterested groups because he was asked to. He does not choose his audience by their potential receptiveness but rather by their willingness to invite him. He will speak outside of his expertise with a disclaimer that illustrates where his opinions are coming from. In almost all cases, he does speak within his area of expertise. The audiences' may vary drastically in receptiveness.

(5) Stand for something. Fence riders are the couch potatoes of the university community. Sometimes they are the first to secure tenure, but they are not the strength of the university. The thoughtful people who believe in something and make their beliefs known are true scholars. National reputation is, in part, gained from being different.. This factor does not usually happen immediately. In this author's situation, it took almost six years of uncertainty as an assistant professor before finding out what he wanted to be when he grew up. There were those who tried to counsel him out of his specialization, and those who encouraged him to find a specialty, an equal number on both sides. The encouraging ones were those who represented something. They themselves had ideas and concepts fresh in the university setting. Their counterparts represented everything. As the author moved away from his group by believing in something special, he found

his field welcomed him, but some did. A very special few did. He and these professors formed an invisible college, exchanging ideas and support for each other. The author's invisible college numbered only nine members, but what a group they were. Each specialized in something slightly different, yet each supported the total of the idea they believed in and that was the idea they presented to the nation.

(6) Set your own standards. Group rules belong to no one; therefore, no one is really totally committed to the absolute exact following of the rule. Even within the author's invisible college, there are those who operate at different levels of expertise with nine different codes of conduct in relation to interpretation, data gathering, method of presentations, and interactions with each other. The absolute factor is integrity. All members of the invisible college hold that in common. "To thine own self be true," seems to be the ultimate challenge. You are readily sized up by the participants of the workshops, the in-service sessions, and the conventions to which you present. Your standards are your business card. A business card should quickly present the facts of the person and the depth of the involvement. Speakers who hand out "key chains" present a standard that says this is the first gimmick, call this number and get the best of the new bag of tricks. These "mail order" consultants are short-lived. They are delightful to follow because they make a real consult look very good. In the long run, only the individual can "rule" on his/her standards. Only an honorable person sustains a national reputation.

(7) Don't hurt anyone. The value of the battle is in the strength of the opponent. Once a national reputation is acquired, it conveys with it some degree of accepted credibility. That factor is sometimes threatening to people who are already unsure in their professional environment. A national reputation must be constantly maintained by exposure and by noted contributions to the profession. It can't be mentioned at the expense of lesser people who, by their location or job description, react with limited knowledge. In other words, no cheap shots allowed in order to make yourself look good. To put it another way, the national consultant will frequently confront a situation similar to that of the

Hollywood epic of the "gunfighter" with the reputation being called out by the local bully because the former, by his mere presence, is a threat to the local reputation of the latter.. A real challenge needs and must get an answer to what may be a devious question. And, as with the true hero/heroine of the western epic, the really powerful gunslinger keeps his/her big gun holstered and walks into the sunset and boards a 747. The power that accompanies a national reputation has to be used with caution. It truly is a double-edged sword and can be of tremendous assistance, when used humanely.

(8) Be available. A verbal request on a telephone or a letter of inquiry represents a request for help. This inquiry may not lead to a consultant engagement. . If the question weren't important to the inquirer, they wouldn't have initiated the inquiry. A national reputation carries with it the responsibility of helping the nation, which must have no preferred regions in relation to providing assistance for the pursuit of solutions. I remember very distinctly an episode that took place many ears ago and involved one of my best doctoral students. There was a question as to the interpretation of a point of view of a very prestigious national figure who maintained a very high national reputation. A letter of inquiry was sent requested further information in the form of a more complete bibliography so the concept could be better researched. The letter was returned with a scrambled message at the bottom, "Read the book again," accompanied by the initials of this person beneath the statement. . To this day the author wonders if the ivy covering on this gentleman's windows still isolates him from the questions of the real world outside his pristine laboratory. He refused a request to dispel ignorance. Was the inquiry too unimportant? Be available and remember-no person who inquires is more or less important than another.. Only important inquiries will be sent to you.

(9) Love what you are doing with an insatiable passion. What you are doing cannot be an occupation. It must be a passion. Maybe this item should have been number one because without this factor, a national reputation cannot be obtained.

## *Conclusion*

Maybe there are really only two things that separate those who gain a national reputation and those of equal talent who do not gain national reputations. If you can overcome these two factors, you have "got it made" as the expression goes. They take their toll in the long run.

The first of these factors is travel. There was a movie out some years ago that starred two-well known comedians and had, in the title, almost every form of transportation. The film depicted, in a humorous manner, the difficulty of getting from point A to point B. The movie was very real to many of us. After a few years, the back of the seat of one airline looks just like another, one rent-a-car like another, one cab like another, one motel like another. Airports are rated by their number of moving walkways and dried f.q.lit stands. Cities become blurs and are rated as easy, not so easy, or hard places to get in and out of.

The second factor is endurance, physical and mental. You must have the stamina to propose, pursue, evaluate, and put into perspective what you have done for the people that have placed their trust in you. This takes time and energy.

Here are tests to determine if it's worth it. When you face the audience and begin to speak: Is there a thrust of adrenaline? Do the minutes and hours fly by? Is there always a little more to say to the group than the time will allow? Do you have something new to teach each time? Did you help somebody? If the answers to these questions are all yes, then it's permissible to continue as a consultant.

You must ask similar questions about our ideas. Is the article I am working on this time the most exciting I have written so far? Does this article have the potential to influence somebody toward a better professional or personal life? Am I proud of my effort? Did I maintain my integrity? If the answers to these questions are yes, then it is permissible to continue to develop your national reputation.



Undisputed integrity, personal pride, and a passion for the pursuit of excellence are the only justifications of a national reputation. The faint of heart need not apply.