



Be Locally Attuned And Responsive

Apr 13

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In order to survive, all organisms are intimately attuned to their environment, aligned with the realities of that particular place and the other living beings with whom they interact. Their success depends on being able to fit within the larger context and then adapt as conditions change.

The challenges of any particular environment – temperature, humidity, sunlight, other creatures -- become the “selection pressures” shaping an organism’s adaptations to help it thrive. Life solves its functional needs in context.

The White-Crowned Sparrow lives across the west. Scientists monitored their distinctive call for 40 years in San Francisco and discovered that as traffic increased, the birds raised their pitch to a higher frequency so they can hear each other above the ambient urban noise. Meanwhile, in the Central Valley of California where there has been a shift from grassland to more scrubland, the birds lowered their song pitch song to penetrate the scrub.

As leaders, we too must consider the context. We succeed when we understand ourselves and our efforts as influenced by the challenges and selection pressures within our particular environment, and the larger system in which it sits. We succeed when we respond appropriately to where we are now. We use readily available resources and energy, in ways that contribute to the thriving of the community as a whole. We build partnerships that allow us to be who we are and yet extend our reach.

What does “local” mean for your efforts? How are you listening for the changing dynamics, and shifting your pitch when there is a need to adapt?

How does being locally attuned and responsive apply to your leadership?