

Conflict Management Seminar
Leavenworth, KS
February 17, 2016
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The day started at The Sod Shop, just off of I70 on the edge of Lawrence, KS. The Sod Shop was hosted by the owner and KARL Class 12 graduate Wade Wilbur. It was great to connect the dots as many of us have driven by this farm several times.

Wade started out with a brief history of his family and how they got into the sod business; starting as a row crop farm, moving into residential mowing and landscaping, and from there stepping into the sod business. The Sod Shop now has facilities in Wichita and Lawrence and serves as one of the largest of Kansas' 24 sod farms. Wade credits their success to the location of the farm as they do the majority of their business in the sprawling Johnson County area as well as a close proximity to Topeka, Manhattan, & Fort Riley. A mandate in the KC area requiring new homes to have sod instead of seeded grasses doesn't seem to be hurting business either.

A hayrack ride through the field where sod was being harvested on a rare 60 degree February afternoon was a bonus feature. There we learned about the process of tilling, packing, leveling, planting, applying netting, growing, mowing and harvesting the lush green grass.

From The Sod Shop we traveled to Riverfront Community Center in Leavenworth, KS. Our first speaker there was Dr. Steven Davies. Dr. Davies grew up in Kingman and proved to have rural KS values. From Kingman Dr. Davies went on to be a Warden at the Lansing State Prison as well as Executive Director Koch Crime Commission. Dr. Davies now serves as Superintendent of USD 430 in Holton, consisting of approximately 500 students.

During Dr. Davies very humorous yet serious talk, he spoke of the method he used in managing the prison systems. This method was to ask “Who do you want your neighbor to be when they get out?” Dr. Davies then went on to talk about how the best crime prevention strategy is within the teaching of our youth, and some of the issues we have facing youth today such as; drugs, sex, and social media. Although these are very serious, we learned of several personal accounts Dr. Davies has run into and the successful strategies he uses to combat issues such as; Clothing for Kids, Haircut & Hygiene training, School lunch/milk programs, dental services, & Lions Club glasses programs. A great quote by Dr. Davies was “I try to make people better because it makes me better.”

A very good chicken and brisket dinner was sponsored by The First State Bank and Trust, Tonganoxie. The final speaker of the day was Ret. Lt. Col. Timothy Thomas with the Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth. Lt. Col. Thomas has the very interesting job of studying foreign military strategies in an unclassified manner through foreign media outlets, foreign military documents, and personal meetings with foreign agencies. The topics of the evening were Lt. Col. Thomas’ view of Russia, the leadership style of Vladimir Putin, and strategies of the Russian military. It was very interesting to learn how Russia handles each military conflict in a different manner such as troop positioning in Syria, legal dealings with the U.N. over oil rights, or uses of force in other situations. One of the biggest take home messages was that Russia believes the future of war is in satellite information and that some of the most feared future attacks may be cyber attacks.

Friday, February 19

Friday started off at John Deere Marketing Headquarters in Olathe with Charles Studer, Director of Industry Relation for John Deere. He explained the world-wide marketing strategies that go into their company mission. This site covers the North America Sales and

Marketing efforts for John Deere and employs 420 people. 80% of sales is supported by U.S./Canada efforts and 20% globally. They have more than 100 locations in 35 countries (49 locations are in the U.S.) And they spend about \$1.5 billion in Research and Development. They have four core strategies that guide their business plans: Integrity, Quality, Commitment, and Innovation. When reviewing corporate strategies they ask themselves, “what are the markets worth winning?” You can’t do it all so need to remain focused on what the company is about. He also mentioned that 70% of this food that farmers must produce more of to feed the increasing population must come from technology efficiencies – grow more with less.

We then traveled to Merck Animal Health in De Soto, Kan. where Scott Borman, VP U.S. Commercial Operations along with Kyra Brownback (KARL Class 12) and the Merck Marketing team shared their views on the animal health industry and how the Merck business philosophy and culture keep them on top. They have 152 staff members at the De Soto location, but they keep in mind the “One Merck Approach.” That means that they have one salesperson for every segment. The customer doesn’t have time for multiple people to be bringing products and services to them at different times – efficiency and cross-training is key here. They are a science and research driven company with 10% of earnings going back to Research and Development. It takes approximately 10 years and \$100 million to make a product. They are fortunate to be diversified across the company as well as within the marketing department. One challenge that they see is that there isn’t a global regulatory system to get products approved across the globe easily. It has nothing to do with public safety, but is always politically driven.

We were able to join Merck Animal Health for a great lunch. We wrapped up with our verbal evaluations before heading home with plans to meet up at our next session in March to Wash. D.C.!