

# 31<sup>st</sup> & Pearl

## CoB – Bushardt = CoB

If you've been following reports here at USMNEWS.NET then you know by now that long-time CoB management professor, Stephen Bushardt, will be leaving USM after 30-June-08, and joining the management faculty at Spring Hill College, a Jesuit institution located in Mobile. After about three decades in Hattiesburg, Bushardt will be joining current Interim CoB Dean, Alvin Williams, who will soon be part of the faculty at the University of South Alabama, on the 90-minute commute across the Mississippi-Alabama line. With the Bushardt exit looming over the horizon, now is a good time to take stock in what his departure will mean for the CoB.

As the title above suggests, I, for one, think this is a classic case of addition by subtraction. For me, at least, one only has to look at what is probably Bushardt's most recent journal publication to see why. Here, I'm talking about Bushardt's essay "Selecting a Better Carrot: Organizational Learning, Formal Rewards, and Culture – A Behavioral Perspective," which is co-authored with CoB "scholars" John Lambert (IB) and David Duhon (MGT). This article was published in the July 2007 issue of the *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*, which is one of the many "pay-for-play" (vanity press) journals within the Allied Academies umbrella. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that the author ordering – Bushardt, Lambert, and Duhon – reflects that (1) Bushardt wrote the article, (2) Lambert found the journal (and paid the submission fee), and (3) Duhon is along for the (thrilling) ride.

But, I digress. It's not the shenanigans that likely went into putting this piece together that brought me to refer to Bushardt's departure as addition by subtraction. That arrival comes from the contents of the article itself. To get to that, let's start with the references. There are about 50 of them, a number large enough to lead one to suspect, at first glance, that all the latest writing on this human resources topic are dealt with in some way. That was not to be, as my analysis indicated.

Let's start with the oldest reference and work our way forward to today, noting the frequency with which references from various years appear in the article: 1957 [2], 1961 [1], 1964 [1], 1968 [1], 1969 [3], 1971 [1], 1972 [1], 1974 [2], 1975 [2], 1976 [2], 1977 [2], 1978 [2], 1980 [1], 1981 [3], 1982 [5], 1983 [3], 1984 [1], 1985 [1], 1986 [3], 1987 [3], 1988 [1], 1991 [1], 1992 [2], 1993 [1], 1999 [1], 2003 [2], and 2005 [1]. That's 2 from the 1950s, six from the 1960s, 12 from the 1970s, 21 from the 1980s, five from the 1990s and just three from

the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I completely understand staying true to the seminal literature – the classics if you will – but this goes way beyond that, doesn't it?.

You might be wondering why Bushardt et al. (2007) were so partial to the '80s. It's not because MTV had hit the scene, or that the Lakers vs. Celtics thing was going on. No, it's because that's when Bushardt was actually doing what little research he actually did during his career. This particular Bushardt et al. (2007) essay hits all those marks, including (1) SB's '82 article with Fowler on motivation dilemmas in management, (2) SB's '87 piece with Fowler on merit pay vs. organizational culture in improving teaching effectiveness, and (3) SB's '88 work with Fowler and Debnath on sales force motivation. You may recall these **timbersnursery.com** items, especially the second one. That one introduces the now infamous "heroes and storytellers [with rituals]" occult-like approach to managing faculty in various higher education settings.

Yes, Bushardt hits all the marks with his 2007 article with the CoB's "good ol' boys." For example, the word "culture" appears 29 times on page one (of the online version) of the article alone. Not to be left out, "behaviors" shows up four times on that first page. The text of the article, including the abstract, is just over 4,700 words. Almost 60 of these are accounted for by "culture." Another scary word in the Bushardt lexicon is "reinforcement." It shows up 33 times. To go along with that, "behaviors" is found 12 times in the text, and its (scary) companion, "shape," appears 11 times. Close behind these two is "Bushardt," which shows up nine times throughout the body of the essay.

Interestingly, the words "efficiency," "equity," "fairness," and "incentives" never appear at all. The term "merit" shows up only twice, which is half the number of times "heroes" is used, and the same number of times that "rituals" and "storytellers" are used. One would think that, in dealing with human resource issues like the ones tackled by Bushardt, Lambert and Duhon, these words would have been used more than twice (combined). It was not to be. This article is, once again, all about the frailties of merit-based pay when it comes to moving an organization forward. What's needed instead, in Bushardt's world at least, is an "organizational culture" that makes use of "heroes and storytellers," through "rituals" of course, to "shape" and "reinforce behaviors" that are desired by the management (i.e., Doty, Niroomand, and Carter). This is what you get from "Bushardt."

One final comment, and this gets to the heart of my addition by subtraction theme. Bushardt got his D.B.A. (1970s), did enough research to get promoted through the ranks at USM (1980s), and "retired on the job" (1990s and 2000s) as they say in academia. He spent the final 20 years of his USM career living off that bit of 1980s research – so much so that this particular 2007 article with Lambert and Duhon is little more than one 4,700-word rehash of all the Bushardt-Fowler (etc.) "organizational culture of motivation-through-rituals" stuff from the late 1980s. The one thing I wish these Bushardt et good ol' boy. articles addressed – if organizational culture is what "steadies the [CoB] boat,"

then what's supposed to happen with all of the merit raise money that Presidents Lucas, Fleming, Lucas, Thames and Saunders allocate to faculty in USM's business school? My guess would be that the Canebrake crew of CoB managers is supposed to handle the bothersome task of disposing with it (i.e., handing it to sycophants). Sadly, we may never know the answer to my question because it (*the answer*) is confidential.

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*31st & Pearl is a series housed at [usmnews.net](http://usmnews.net) that features commentary on aspects of life in the CoB from a variety of columnists.*