AMTC NEWS

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Autonomy, Mastery & Purpose

AMTC's every focus is to benefit our clients. In doing so, we strive to exceed expectations by working together and taking responsibility for our individual and collective commitments. These commitments are only as strong as our team, a strong foundation of professionals who are at all times eager to learn and develop. With this in mind, AMTC's full-time staff and client account associates convened for a retreat to assess organizational practices and goals, explore avenues for growth and to connect with each other.

The two-day retreat included various activities that will be described throughout this newsletter. Among them, we explored a TED Talk by Daniel Pink, a renowned speaker and author who explores what success in the workplace means in a changing world. Specifically, team members examined the video, "The Puzzle of Motivation."[1]

In his talk, Pink challenges his listeners to evaluate the utility of extrinsic rewards, such as monetary incentives in the modern workplace. These types of rewards may have historically served a purpose in certain types of careers; however, old-school organizational and personal frameworks of productivity just don't cut it anymore. In today's age, knowledge, creativity and problem-solving are required to stand out and succeed.

While the typical business model still ascribes to extrinsic rewards, Pink suggests three intrinsic motivators as the basis for success:

- ***Autonomy: The urge to direct our own lives***
- ***Mastery: The desire to get better and better at something that matters***
- ***Purpose: The yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves***

During our time together at the retreat we explored how autonomy, mastery and purpose fit well within the AMTC model to serve our clients. Within these three categories, I offered my personal realization—that professional success is not possible without first experiencing joy in life. It affects all we do, whether personal or professional. We discussed these elements as a team in the context of joy and self-fulfillment.

- **Autonomy: We explored how we cultivate happiness, something that takes work but singular in the sense that no one else can do it for you.**
- **Mastery: We delved into ways that we can improve professionally, learn more, strive higher.**
- **Purpose: We examined ways that our career and daily work gives us purpose; we found many.**

We will further explore this framework to continue providing the best services possible.

Angela M. Turner

Angela Turner, Principal

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[1]TED: Ideas Worth Spreading. *The Puzzle of Motivation*. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation?language=en

Engaging Sessions at the Retreat

Torri Childs and Ann Wolter

Learning as a team can be more powerful than on one's own. During the retreat, members took an active role and presented on varying topics. Participants were as excited to share as they were to learn. The sessions were engaging, and participants gleaned insights that will help inform their future work.

Ann Wolter, Senior Evaluation Associate, presented first. She explored different types of evaluations to expand AMTC's deep repertoire of evaluative tools. Broadly, she discussed: standards and guiding principles of the evaluation profession, types of evaluation, and essential evaluation competencies that include self-assessment and developing a plan for growth. She's honed in on these areas based on a course she recently took, "Introduction to Evaluation and Institutional Research." It's the first in a series of eight courses from the University of Wisconsin-Stout, where Wolter will eventually earn a certificate in evaluation studies. She is a learner as much as a guide.

Wolter discussed, "continuous quality improvement." This means that evaluative techniques are employed during the entire process of working with clients. By incorporating evaluations throughout, "We're assisting our clients to rediscover, reinterpret, and revise their understanding and behaviors of how they run their program, and they're utilizing us to do that with the clients they serve," said Wolter.

"What Ann presented on evaluations was really interesting to me," said Melanie Porterfield, another Senior Evaluation Associate, "to find out more about how evaluations are categorized, and what we do for capacity building and technical assistance—and everything we do on a daily basis—is all part of evaluation."

In another session, Evaluation Associate Ryan Adomavich offered insights into client relationships. Developing meaningful and lasting relationships with clients is a bedrock of AMTC, and one worth continuous attention. Each client is unique, with different needs and circumstances. It therefore follows that each client has different preferences when it comes to modes of communication. Different AMTC staff may work with the same client but in different capacities, so ensuring a seamless flow of communication is important.

Adomavich reinforced what the team already works so hard to ensure—knowing the client on a personal level sets the tone for a healthy working relationship. "It's those personal touches," he said, "that helps to segue into the meat and potatoes. We have to talk about work at some point, but it's nice to take a breath and ask, 'How was your weekend?' I think that's really important."

Although the client and AMTC are always hard at work in their respective roles, Adomavich explained, "Once the program is up and running you don't hear from people over time. Just because they've hit the ground running and we're doing everything we can behind the scenes doesn't mean we can't just check in, even when everything is going well and according to plan. I think we do a good job of keeping in contact with everybody and finding ways to communicate." Everyone appreciated the session. Wolter commented that these efforts "will continue to improve our services to clients, for sure. This discussion helped that to happen."

Sara Woods, a senior evaluation associate, presented on two topics. The first related to client-focused needs, in addition to the communication areas that Adomavich addressed. "It's important to understand our clients' wants and needs so that we can provide client-focused services," noted Woods. Further, if at any point a member of AMTC needs to move into a position to help any given client, everyone will be on the same page with those specific needs.

Melanie Porterfield and Sara Woods

Her other presentation focused on ice breakers. It's something she performs a lot with clients. "When we do ice breakers at trainings or at conferences, it's always nice to start the day light hearted and get everybody talking. I try to find ones that are not run of the mill," commented Woods. She avoids ice breakers that are political in nature

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or that might be physically taxing for some individuals. Associates played their own ice breaker, a get-to-know-you question game. The questions were open ended and silly. Two examples are, "If you were to date a celebrity, who would it be? If you could live on two foods, what would they be?" Everyone enjoyed the session. "Some of it was surprising," said Woods, "because all of us are so close and tight knit. Even so, we'd say, 'Oh my gosh. I didn't know that!'"

Aiming to know more was a large part of the retreat. AMTC focuses on its own growth as much as it does its clients. A growing knowledge base impacts everyone in AMTC's sphere, for the better.

Geocaching and Teamwork

From left to right
- **Torri Childs**
- **Sara Woods**
- **Ann Wolter**
- **Ryan Adomavich**
- **Angela Turner**
- **Melanie Porterfield**

GO TEAM!

During the retreat, team members participated in geocaching. In short, it's an outdoor scavenger hunt across a large area that uses a Global Positioning System (GPS) device to discover the general location of an object; yet, a GPS alone did not suffice. To find the precise location teammates had to figure out hints, including puns, word scrambles or number challenges.

A GPS can be an analogy for both the retreat and AMTC's work overall. In any organization, the ability for an individual to work independently is important; equally essential is how each individual contributes to the whole. "It takes all minds working together to solve a problem," said Torri Childs, a Field Research Associate. She noted, whether it's geocaching or working on behalf of clients, different minds use different lenses which enriches the whole and enables better solutions.

Ryan Adomavich, Evaluation Associate, agrees. "You have to be independent and do things on your own, and this was true when it came to geocaching, but without having a good team, good communication, and keeping everyone in the loop, I don't think we would have been able to get through our scavenger hunt." It parallels two of AMTC's core values, accountability and collaboration. We take responsibility for our commitments both as an individual and as a team, all while working together to achieve goals. Geocaching combined these elements with a lot of fun along the way.

Yet, a collaborative spirit did not come as a surprise to anyone. "We are such a close group. During the geocaching all of our strengths came out strongly. It was goal-orientated and we had a lot of fun doing it," said Sara Woods, Senior Evaluation Associate. Everyone strongly agreed. "Geocaching highlighted what a great team we are," emphasized Ann Wolter, Senior Evaluation Associate.

Each team member also noted how wonderful it was to be together in-person. Melanie Porterfield, a Senior Evaluation Associate, noted that team members are located in different parts of the country. Although everyone is in consistent contact with each other via technology, as soon as they were physically together, "we synced right away like we normally do," said Porterfield.

"That was incredibly meaningful to me," said AMTC's Principal, Angie Turner, "to feel so incredibly comfortable with the team. It felt just like getting together with family. We picked up right where we left off. The retreat energized us to keep the team moving so that we can continue to accomplish whatever comes our way."

AMTC & Associates is a team that works seamlessly, based on mutual care and support. It fits the organization's vision to a tee, "To be a trusted and respected professional services firm recognized by our clients for delivering high quality services that improve the economic independence of their customers." Trusted and respected. It's built into AMTC's team to serve your team, better.