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## Leaders can take the initiative at Asheville conference next week

By Ed Brenegar

REAL LIFE LEADERSHIP

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Question: The idea that leadership begins with personal initiative sounds so ordinary. Why is this where the impact of leadership begins?

Answer: When you strip away all the simplistic formulas, the abstract theories and the hype of the celebrity leader, what you have are people who make decisions that lead to actions that affect people. Leadership initiative is the sequence of steps from idea to decision to action.

It can be as mundane as making a phone call or can take a more complex form — such as an event that some Asheville business leaders have planned for next week.

The WNC Leaders “Lessons in Leadership” conference, slated for Wednesday evening at the Grove Park Inn, was organized by HomeTrust Bank CEO Dana Stonestreet, business coach Brian Biro, Crescent PPO marketing director Keith Challenger, Grove Park Inn executive operations director William Kelley and John Locke, regional business development manager at Dixon Hughes. The organizations of these leaders are underwriting the event, so the cost is just \$20 per person.

Biro, an Asheville resident who is an international corporate coach and best-selling author, will deliver the keynote address.

When I found out about the event, I asked the organizers why they got involved.

“We have seen the impact our people make as they stay with us and grow in their careers,” Stonestreet said. “Our current culture and success have been accomplished by our people, and we want to invest in their continued development as well as honor them and give back to the community.”

“With life’s pressures,” Locke told me, “many people don’t take the time or invest the money to learn from professionals who have helped people achieve their goals and dreams. This an opportunity to learn from top professionals and then apply it to their lives.”

I asked what they hoped the impact would be.

“Most of all, I hope participants will emerge with the conviction that who they are makes a difference,” Biro said. “I want them to embrace the belief that they have choices about their attitude, energy, communication and focus that can ignite great momentum in their lives and businesses.”

This is a prime example of personal initiative. As is often true, one initiative leads to another, building strength and impact.

This leadership conference provides an opportunity for local businesses to take initiative by bringing their staffs and teams to the event. The event is set up “to make it attractive as a team experience,” Challenger wrote in an e-mail to me. “We’re not just talking about getting a lot of people in the room together but about having teams share a learning and growth experience.”

All impact begins with the personal initiative of someone who says, "We need to do this." These actions affect people and help to build the strength of their organization. Act quickly to sign up your team by visiting [wncleaders.com](http://wncleaders.com). The organizers expect a sellout.

This is the opinion of Ed Brenegar. He is president of the Community of Leadership, a leadership development and transition-planning consultancy. He writes the Leading Questions blog at <http://edbrenegar.typepad.com>. Send your leadership questions to him at [ed@edbrenegar.com](mailto:ed@edbrenegar.com).

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