


**INDIAN HILLS**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
*Life. Changing.*



Thirty-five and Leading: Opportunities,  
Challenges, and Lessons Learned from a Young  
Executive Leader  
May 2, 2016

## Who is Matt Thompson?



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- Dad
- Husband
- Vice President of Academic Affairs, Indian Hills Community College



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## Background

- Attended 2-year college
- Graduated from Iowa State University
- Completed Master's Degree at East Tennessee State University
- Taught community college history
- Worked at Iowa State University in transfer admissions and articulation
- Coordinated afternoon/evening classes at Des Moines Area Community College Hunziker Center
- Accepted executive level student affairs position at Southwestern Community College (Age 27)



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Starting as a new executive leader is like...



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## Drinking from a Firehose



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## The Young Leader's Challenge

Developing Credibility

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## The Young Leader's Challenge

Understanding Organizational Culture




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## The Young Leader's Challenge

Knowing the Community




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## The Young Leader's Challenge

Creating Trust





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## What other young leaders are saying...

“As a young leader it has been important for me to be accountable. At times to work harder and more hours, to show that I am capable of doing the job. I’ve also had to learn who I can trust to be in my inner circle when socializing.”

- Female, Higher Education Leader




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## What other young leaders are saying...

“Never underestimate the connections you make early in your career and how that network will help you in the future. I’ve also learned it is important to gain a broad base of experience in your career. That will help you become a much better individual and professional.”

- Male, Business Leader



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### What other young leaders are saying...

"I once saw a shirt that said – Good Girls Don't Make History – and I've lived my life that way. I've learned that you can't make decisions that make everyone happy and expect to make change."

- Female, Legislator



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### What other young leaders are saying...

"It is important to have patience during your leadership journey. I have moved up in my organization but it has not happened as quickly as I wanted. While I moved into mid-level management, I have had to be patient for that executive level position. There are not many of those positions available at my organization and I'm not interested in relocating my family."

- Male, Higher Education Leader



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### What other young leaders are saying...

"The one thing you can count on is that everything is going to change. You must always be prepared for change. As a young leader that has been something I have learned and other leaders need to be prepared for it too."

- Male, Business Leader



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### Lessons Learned

- Listen—Live the Life for awhile.
- Create positive energy.
- Think service and community first.
- Be a mentor, have a mentor.
- Find a trusted sounding board.



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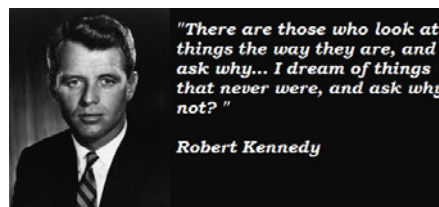
### Lessons Learned

- Seek quality professional development opportunities.
- Be humble and have self-awareness.
- Emphasize collaboration.
- Be honest and real.
- Take care of your personal and family life.



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### Why Not?



Robert Kennedy



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