

December 19, 2014

Are You Crew Or Captain? (Part 1)

[I am going to try something different – a three-part post that will take “The Last Word” through the first of the year (that is, Part 1 today, and Part 2 and Part 3 over the next couple weeks). It didn’t start out this way. I had an idea for what I wanted to write. But in prepping for the post, I found some great resource material that takes the topic to the next level and would have made this post much too long, so I decided to string it out. JEJ]

I read a fun post the other day about the classic *Muppet Show* as a model for institutional organization and life in higher education. You can find it here - <http://shar.es/13DI0c>. I tried to figure out a way to apply it to the world of disability services, but I couldn’t make the parallels work (in part, perhaps, because too many DSS providers work largely on their own, without a supporting cast and crew). But it got me thinking about the different roles that DSS providers play, and led me to a different set of parallels, stolen from the world of entertainment. So here you have my take on THE PEOPLE OF *Star Trek*... DSS style!

I probably should preface this by saying that I am a devotee of the REAL *Star Trek*... the original TV series, the movies that followed with those characters, and I’ll even give a nod to *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (as they regularly acknowledged and paid homage to the original cast and concept). I’ve seen the newer movies in which they are re-writing history. The movies have been good and the casts are intriguing. But they aren’t the REAL *Star Trek*! I was speculating on how many of the classic characters that we grew to know are represented somewhere in the ranks of DSS providers today.

Starting from the bottom, I have to give a nod to the “**expendable Ensign.**” In many a *Star Trek* episode, there was a new character, Ensign So-and-So, introduced during the opening few scenes as a highly competent and prized member of the crew we hadn’t seen before – and who was quickly dispatched (as in “killed off, never to be seen again”) when the plot called for someone to die – after all, it couldn’t be one of the series regulars! I was sad to see reports on various listservs within the last few weeks of two young DSS providers who have been in their positions for a relatively short time and who have chosen to leave their posts and move on to other settings. I have had some significant contact with both of them, and they are GOOD at what they do. They have asked questions, learned, tried to make a difference. In both cases, I have reason to suspect that a large part of their decisions hinged on the lack of support, trust, and cooperation they received from their institutional administration during their time in place. That’s too bad, on two fronts. Not only have we lost two potentially valuable actors in the field, but I don’t hold much hope for whomever follows them into that position having great longevity either.

Pavel Chekov – the young navigator of the Starship Enterprise came late to the party – he didn’t appear in the original series until the opening episode of Season Two. He is portrayed as very bright and very competent (he not only steers the ship, he backs up

Mr. Spock at the Science Station when necessary), somewhat naïve, excitable, and enthusiastic. He is a brave man of action, who never does anything halfway. Hmmm... I can name a number of young service providers who remind me of Chekov. They came to the field after (in some cases, LONG after) the introduction of the ADA. The field was established when they joined it, but it hasn't stopped them from jumping in, learning their trade, and becoming standout team players. Pavel Chekov eventually became a Starfleet Admiral. Certainly, these young folks are the future of our field.

Lt. Uhura – She was the only strong female character in the regular *Star Trek* crew (although there were others in *The Next Generation*). To me, though, neither her gender nor her racial identity were particularly significant to the storylines of *Star Trek* (although they were somewhat groundbreaking for TV at that time). Uhura was the Chief Communications Officer, and she was good at it. She was great at establishing contact with everyone from unknown species to hostile forces (think “students with emerging disabilities and helicopter parents!”). In my mind, though, she was a weak character because she never made any decisions. She never **CHOSE** a course of action, she simply followed the directives of others. They knew she was capable and they depended on her, but you never had the feeling they had much confidence in her decision-making. Uhura also had a tendency to suggest the cautious route (“But, sir... don't you think that...”), which Captain Kirk regularly ignored. I worry about DSS providers who want to discuss **everything** with someone else before they make a decision. Consulting with faculty is generally a fine idea, but NOT to encourage them to tell you what they want done – only in terms of determining **how** to get things done... things that you already determined were necessary. Lt. Uhura never rose very high in the ranks of Starfleet.

Lt. Sulu – He was listed as the helmsman, but Lt. Sulu became the trusted 3rd officer on the ship (after Kirk and Spock). He was steady and dependable, and the Captain trusted both his judgment and his skills (“You have the bridge, Mr. Sulu”). I know many DSS providers who seem to have a little (or a lot?!?) of Sulu in them. They are the people who keep their offices running and quietly assure that the students with disabilities on their campuses have full access. They don't carry a very high rank in the institutional hierarchy, and they may or may not be well known on campus. But they get the job done, never fear.

Scotty – The Chief Engineer of the Starship Enterprise could fix anything, jury-rig available materials to make them work a different way (the way that was needed!), and creatively use the technology he had, to make it do things no one else had considered. The obvious parallels to the tech-savvy among us aside, I think the “Scotty's” of the DSS world are also among the best diplomats in our field. They can make anything happen because they understand how their institutions work, and they know what to say, who to go to, what buttons to push to get things done. They may not appear as flashy or carry as much weight on paper as counterparts at other institutions who have fancier titles or are higher in the food chain. But these DSS providers can always be counted on to come through when it's important.

Dr. “Bones” McCoy – The good doctor never forgot the people behind the missions. He certainly knew how to heal people physically, but he was at least as concerned with their mental well-being. In many ways, he served as the conscience of the crew. It is interesting to note that in *The Next Generation*, the role served by Dr. McCoy was split between a doctor who did the physical healing, and a ship’s counselor who tended to the crew’s psyche. Do you suppose they were trying to tell us that getting the job done (making accommodations) is one thing, but that understanding the whole person is too important a function to be considered as nothing but an add-on responsibility? There is no question that Bones is a central character in *Star Trek* and that his contribution is vital to the whole. But I wouldn’t want to see him in charge of the Enterprise. He is great as a sounding board – not so much as a definitive decision maker. Hmmm...

Mr. Spock – Spock’s strength is his ability to bring logic to bear on every situation. It is also his weakness. Not everything that happens in a world full of messy, complicated, unique beings will happen in a logical way, and Spock often has trouble understanding why those variations occur, thus being prepared for them when they happen. I know DSS providers like that. Instead of relying on logic for everything, they rely on the 504 and the ADA. They know the statutes backwards and forwards and they can rattle off case precedents with abandon. But they don’t always know how to apply them or how to extrapolate from them for the next messy, complicated, unique situation. I think all DSS providers should have some Spock in them. They need to know the laws and they need to be logical. But too much of a good thing is... never a good thing! GRIN

That brings us to the top rank – and that is where I am going to stop for today. Next week, I’m going to talk about the leadership style of James T. Kirk, and on the 2nd, I’ll visit Jean Luc Picard.

Have a happy, healthy break.
Janie

LIVE LONG AND PROSPER!!!

December 26, 2014

Are You Crew Or Captain? (Part 2)

Last week we talked about the original crew of the Starship Enterprise and which Star Trek character you might best resemble in your practice of disability services. From the “expendable ensign” and Pavel Chekov on up through Mr. Spock, the crew of the Starship Enterprise were capable and good at their jobs. They all are role models in their own way, and they were responsible for keeping the ship moving forward in space. I would equate that to making sure students with disabilities on your campus are well served and fully included. But let’s talk about leadership and teamwork and lessons we could all learn from Captain James T. Kirk.

For those “old” Trekkies like me, the *Forbes* article that was my inspiration for this piece can be found at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/alexknapp/2012/03/05/five-leadership-lessons-from-james-t-kirk/> and it is great fun to read. Lots of references to specific incidents and episodes that you will remember. But even if you only know OF Captain Kirk as a cultural icon, he has lessons to teach about being an effective leader. The article lists five key elements of Kirk’s style.

NEVER STOP LEARNING

The fact that Captain Kirk led his ship and his crew to save the galaxy (and beyond!) on a weekly basis showcased his skills as a man of action, not afraid to make decisions. But we rarely had time to reflect, in that one-hour-minus-commercial-time, on how much miscellaneous knowledge he brought to bear on those decisions. Kirk was described by a classmate at the Star Fleet Academy as “a walking stack of books.” He had extensive knowledge of history, and the information he acquired out of curiosity, rather than necessity, was often helpful in informing his choices. He had an uncanny ability to relate what he knew to what he needed. Then, too, it is interesting to remember that although Kirk was not afraid to do battle when the situation called for it, the mission of the Enterprise was to serve as galactic anthropologists – “to seek out new life, and new civilizations.”

Disability service providers need to keep learning, as well, in order to be prepared for new challenges as they present – from students with emerging disabilities (how many of AHEAD’s charter members do you think knew anything about Autism?), to figuring out how to use technology (what comes after a Livescribe™ pen?), to knowing how to apply the latest case precedents (“I understand 504 and ADA – what do I do with FERPA and the FHAA?”). While the internet can provide a wealth of solid information to answer your questions, you won’t know what questions to ask if you don’t pay attention to what is happening outside your own institution. You can learn about Autism from doing a web search, but you can only profit from the experience of others in the field in supporting students on the spectrum if you are connected to those others. Any disability services director who doesn’t belong to a state or national professional organization for disability service providers should definitely take the plunge. Service providers who are not subscribed to at least one professional listserv are foolishly squandering an incredibly important resource.

HAVE ADVISORS WITH DIFFERENT WORLD VIEWS

James Kirk had Mr. Spock to give him the most logical answer, and Leonard (Bones) McCoy to remind him of the human (and humane) thing to do. He wasn’t afraid to ask for input from Scotty on whether his ideas were practical, or to tap into the expertise of Sulu, Uhura, and all the other discipline experts who manned the ship. But as Kirk once told McCoy, *“One of the advantages of being a Captain, Doctor, is being able to ask for advice without necessarily having to take it.”* Kirk never failed to ask for opinions, but neither was he afraid to make decisions. His strength was in his ability to listen to viewpoints that differed from his own, and each other’s, without having it shake his confidence in himself to make the hard choices. It is also a testament to his skill as a leader that those around him were not afraid to offer their opinions.

Disability service providers often feel isolated on campus (and many ARE “lone practitioners” in their environment). That can lead to both the feeling that you *must* learn to be self-sufficient, and that your opinions are the only ones that matter. Neither is healthy. Set an atmosphere among staff that allows them to feel safe in offering opinions, without feeling disrespected if you do otherwise. If you don’t have staff to bounce ideas around, find advisors outside your office who can help you. Seek out colleagues in other areas of Student Services, or that benevolent administrator who will give you an honest opinion but leave it to you to take action without interference. Talk to your DSS colleagues via state networks and/or listservs. Listen to the various perspectives they offer. Then make a decision and act on it. The word “timid” was not in Captain Kirk’s vocabulary.

BE PART OF THE AWAY TEAM

One of the earliest lessons I was taught as a camp counselor was that the best leaders lead by example. You cannot lay in your bunk when the loudspeaker gives the wake up call and grouse at the campers for not being up and moving. (You have to be walking between the bunks and getting in their faces!) James Kirk was never afraid to be out in front of his team, especially when they were headed into uncharted territory. Yet, never did you feel that he was leading the team because he was micromanaging his workers. There is a fine line to be drawn between those two options.

There are two excellent reasons for leading the “away team” – the vanguard for your office. First, when you are there to assess the situation as it arises, you are also better able to make a quick assessment and appropriate decisions in a timely manner. If you put staff in the position of acting without instructions, you cannot complain if they make a choice other than yours. Moreover, the very fact that you ARE the leader suggests that you are privy to information that others are not, and that information may be critical to the decision at hand. But there is another reason to consider getting out from behind your desk. *“What’s more, when you’re not involved with your team, it’s easy to lose their trust and have them gripe about how you don’t understand what the job is like.”* The best disability service directors I know are adept at many things, from budgeting to politics, that their staff may not be involved with. But they never stop being shoulder to shoulder, on the front line, as well. They have a few students for whom they continue to serve as disability specialist – often taking responsibility for the “problem” students who have complained about or harassed one of the others on the staff. It is important to always be PART of the team if you are to lead them effectively.

PLAY POKER, NOT CHESS

I have included a great description from the *Forbes* article of how this leadership strategy is evoked by James Kirk. The bottom line, though, is that chess is a game with a finite number of choices and, if you are very good at it, you can see all the choices for action, both your own and your opponents.’ In poker, on the other hand, you know only your own cards and your goal. In chess, everyone starts evenly. In poker, some hands are better than others but winning is based on BOTH the cards you are holding and how

skillfully you play them. With a little luck, and a large dollop of bravado, you can prevail against formidable odds.

I have written before about how important I think it is for disability service providers to be good at spinning a story, practicing Irish Diplomacy (when you tell someone to go to Hell in such a way as to make them look forward to the trip), and appearing confident in your decisions, even when you aren't. Captain Kirk knew the value of a good bluff – so should you! Sometimes accomplishing your goal or getting the answer you want/need is less about the option you are pushing and more about your skill in presenting it!

BLOW UP THE ENTERPRISE

We have some folks retiring in the next few years who have been doing this work for a LONG time. The ones who have been most successful in their longevity are those who are doing things very differently now than they were 20-30 years ago. They have changed with the times as the legal interpretations have evolved and new populations of students with disabilities have emerged. But for many, those changes were incremental. They found a way to incorporate what was needed for new populations into what was already in existence. They tweaked the system – they didn't start from scratch. For many, their motto has been, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!"

But James Kirk knew that sometimes that wasn't good enough. In one of the movie outings, in order to defeat the Klingons and save his crew, Captain Kirk destroyed the Enterprise and returned home, triumphant, on a stolen Klingon vessel. Interestingly, the crew all served the same functions on that Klingon vessel that they had served on their own (from the navigator and communications officer, to Spock at the Science station) – but it had to be done a little differently because the ship was configured differently. They got home safely because they used their skills and their hard won experience and adapted to something close, but not the same, as what they knew. It is important to note that when Kirk and his crew returned to earth, they were given an updated Enterprise Starship. It was much closer to what they knew than the Klingon vessel... but nothing was quite the same, even then.

Are you seeing the parallel? Think online learning. Think internet. Think of how higher education, in general, is moving to the virtual world, and think about the way you have always done things in your office. Are you going to try to fold everything in to what you know... or is it time to blow up the Enterprise?

Hope you are enjoying your holidays!
Janie

(From Forbes)

In one of my all-time favorite Star Trek episodes, Kirk and his crew face down an unknown vessel from a group calling themselves the "First Federation." Threats from the vessel escalate until it seems that the destruction of the Enterprise is imminent. Kirk

asks Spock for options, who replies that the Enterprise has been playing a game of chess, and now there are no winning moves left. Kirk counters that they shouldn't play chess – they should play poker. He then bluffs the ship by telling them that the Enterprise has a substance in its hull called "corbomite" which will reflect the energy of any weapon back against an attacker. This begins a series of actions that enables the Enterprise crew to establish peaceful relations with the First Federation.

[Happy New Year! Here is the third offering in our review of how the characters of Star Trek provide models to emulate for the world of DSS. When you finish reading this, and are feeling all warm and fuzzy about possibilities for the future (and about me?), please take a minute to look over the DAIS Spring Course Catalog I have attached. Hope to see you in class! Janie]

January 2, 2015

Are You Crew Or Captain? (Part 3)

In the last two weeks, we've spoken of the crew and Captain of the original Starship Enterprise, and the lessons they can teach us about teamwork, personality traits, management styles, and leadership. Before we leave these futuristic models and return to a new year of *current* challenges, we have one more person (persona?) to consider.

Captain Jean Luc Picard commanded the Enterprise D -- a later version of the ship (and crew) that started it all. Picard and James Kirk were very different from the start. Kirk was 31 when he took command, and his crew was young, eager, and (to a certain extent) footloose and fancy free. In contrast, Picard was 59, had more life experiences of his own to draw from, and the Enterprise D carried the families of the crew as well, meaning that Picard had the safety of many more folks to consider along the way.

[Hmmm... I just realized that there may be parallels to the world of DSS even here. The folks who started the field of disability services 35+ years ago came into their positions with a great deal of enthusiasm, but not a lot of experience – because NO ONE had experience in disability services in those days. The folks directing disability services offices today may or may not be older, but they definitely come to their positions with a different level of information – of experience – than those early pioneers. And they have a higher level of responsibility, as well. The number of students with disabilities has grown substantially (exponentially?), and the complexity of issues faced by today's DSS directors is undeniable (we left behind "blind, deaf, or in a wheelchair" a long time ago!).]

James Kirk's leadership style was bold; Jean Luc Picard's was measured. He may have seemed more cautious, but Picard accomplished no less, either for Starfleet or for the people he commanded. You can check out the Forbes article for more Star Trek examples here -- <http://www.forbes.com/sites/alexknapp/2012/03/13/five-leadership-lessons-from-jean-luc-picard/> -- for now, let's talk about Picard's legacy for the world of DSS.

SPEAK TO PEOPLE IN THE LANGUAGE THEY UNDERSTAND (OR, IT'S OK TO THREATEN A KLINGON)

We have talked before about the difference between having all the right information and being able to communicate it in an effective way. Part of it has to do not just with *how* that information is communicated, but *to whom*. When you make a decision that Student A should receive double time as an extension on a midterm exam, the information you convey to the student about that decision is different from the information you convey to the faculty member. Student A's Mom (who calls demanding to know why it isn't unlimited time) should hear a different explanation, while the Department Chair who calls because the faculty member is whining needs to hear something different, still. It is all about the assignment of double time, but the questions they are asking – and the explanations they need to hear – are different. You don't need to tell them what they WANT to hear, but you'd better be sure you are telling them what they NEED to hear, in the same terminology they would use.

When my daughter, Cottie, was getting ready to go away to college, we had to figure out what kind of documentation to present to the DSS provider at the school to support her requests for accommodations (for her cerebral palsy). I knew her pediatrician and special ed teachers (who would be providing most of the information) had little knowledge of how Cottie's functional limitations would translate to academic accommodations in higher ed. On the other hand, I knew that the DSS provider at the school she was planning to attend was relatively new at her job, and had certainly never had much experience with a kid like mine (her expertise was in issues of mental health and cognitive disabilities). So I put together detailed information that spelled it all out. For example, "Although she is always intellectually ready for tests, Cottie often gets nervous during testing situations, making the test a more grueling physical task rather than one of intellect. Writing becomes more difficult which makes it harder for her to "think past the motor skill of writing" (and swallowing and holding her pencil and sitting right and a million other things that most of us do automatically)." I took the appropriate pieces to the physician and the teachers and said, "I don't care what else you say in the letters you write, but I need you to include this rhetoric, please." When the letters got to the DSS provider, they translated easily into academic accommodations.

WHEN YOU ARE OVERWHELMED, ASK FOR HELP

This should be an easy one, but it doesn't appear to be so for many folks. In part, sometimes it is difficult to recognize that you are overwhelmed. I know a lot of DSS providers who shoulder so much responsibility and have so many demands on their time every day, that the proverbial "straw that breaks the camel's back" often gets added to the pile without much fanfare. It is sometimes difficult to acknowledge that there is simply no way to get everything done by yourself, as what needs to be done is simply a lot more of those things you have been doing by yourself all along. For this kind of problem, there is a relatively straightforward solution that should be seen as a positive, rather than a negative. Cultivate expertise in members of your team. Mentor

them along, share your methods and your decision-making, so that when things start to pile up, you can pass some of it off to others both to get things done and to cultivate leadership capabilities. (And, for those of you who are sole practitioners, this is still a working philosophy; it may mean redesigning systems so that you do the professional pieces and administrative personnel or student workers do the follow-through. But you can still ask for, and get, help when you need it.)

A more serious breach in leadership comes when the leader does not ask for help for fear of losing face, or showing signs of weakness. It seems to happen most often when the leader is new in the position, or feels their authority or expertise is challenged, and thus refuses to ask for help out of fear that it will confirm this lack of confidence from others. It rarely ends well. In this case, the request for help often should be about asking for opinions or suggestions, rather than needing practical assistance. We learned from James Kirk (last week) to have advisors with different world views, and that it is still up to the leader to choose to follow that advice (or not!). The problem comes when the leader fails to reach out for advice at all! Asking for help – and advice – is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of confidence in your own judgment and abilities.

ALWAYS VALUE ETHICAL ACTIONS OVER EXPEDIENT ONES

There are those rare occasions when DSS providers are faced with truly ethical dilemmas, and I would like to think that most of the folks I know in our field would take the high road. I remember a time, many years ago, when a prominent DSS provider was caught in the crossfire of institutional politics and, as the scapegoat for a very public administrative mistake, was fired by his institution and unceremoniously escorted off campus. Within 48 hours, the Director of that program resigned in protest of the institution's actions. That takes guts. For most of us, the "ethical actions" are a lot less traumatic – but equally important.

What happens when you evaluate all the information available, determine appropriate accommodations for access, and then someone else (Faculty? Administration?) overrules your decision because they are being inappropriately "kind" (giving in because they want to help the "poor, handicapped kid"), or are running scared from threats issued by irate parents? I know what SHOULD happen. The DSS provider should stick to his/her original decision and patiently explain why that is the recommended course of action. Agreeing with what others are determined to do simply because it would be easier and suggest you are a team player may be the expedient thing – but not the ethical thing.

BUT (and this is a BIG "but"), sticking to your original decision is not the same thing as refusing to follow through or cooperate with what others have chosen to do. You can disagree with their decision without being openly defiant of their right to make that (wrong) decision. Make it clear (in writing, if necessary), that you would have done otherwise for such-and-such a reason. Then do what you can to facilitate what needs to happen for their decision to be implemented. First, it gives you knowledge, if not

control, of what is happening so that you won't be blindsided when the issue comes up again. More importantly, you may be able to mitigate the damage if you have some involvement in the implementation. What you **SHOULDN'T** do is to wash your hands of the situation ("do it my way or I'll have nothing to do with it") or – worse – try to prohibit the actions decided by others. If you tell the faculty member, "you are not allowed to give that student double time when I only assigned time-and-a-half" you are opening yourself, and your office, to all sorts of well-deserved criticism. There is nothing in your job description that gives you the authority to restrict what anyone at the institution chooses to do/give to a student with a disability that goes beyond the legal mandate for access. It is likely that those bad decisions by others are not unethical... they are just DUMB. Acting ethically is a personal goal. It has to do with what YOU do, not with what others do.

CHALLENGE YOUR TEAM TO HELP THEM GROW

Picard was not just an effective leader. He was great at leadership development. He pushed the people who served under him to go beyond their comfort zone. Generally, DSS providers are pretty good at doing that for/with students with disabilities, but not always with team members and colleagues. Is there someone in your office who is resistant to using new technology (hardware or software). Make it clear that you can't afford for them NOT to be using it – and neither can they. They don't have to be thrilled with the capabilities of the new technology, but they have to understand the basics. You need to know that every member of the team is equally capable of stepping in to do their share (and that means embracing the changing way that things are being done). Tell them, too, that **THEY** need to be part of the change or they will make themselves obsolete (which is true).

[About five years ago, my daughter pushed me to get a smart phone. I had been using – and been perfectly happy with – my flip phone. After five years, I have about a dozen apps on the phone that I use regularly. I have about two dozen more that I couldn't identify for you. I've never used them and don't feel a burning need for them. But I understand how smart phones work and what they can do well enough that I can get done what I need to and, perhaps more importantly, I can understand how an app on a smart phone might allow someone to do this-or-that. I understand commercials on TV or articles I read online very differently because I have something to relate them to.]

Technology is just one example. The folks that you work with will only grow to have confidence in their own abilities and skills when they are allowed – forced? – to try them out. We spoke, above, about valuing ethical actions over expedient ones. I would add to that a reminder that *sometimes*, doing things yourself because it is faster and easier may be the expedient thing to do without being the right thing to do. Look for opportunities to step aside and let others do the important things and help them grow.

DON'T PLAY IT SAFE. SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITIES IN FRONT OF YOU.

Jean Luc Picard may have been more cautious than James Kirk, but he was no sissy. While he was more inclined to carefully plan out his moves (instead of Kirk's bold style of decision making), he never failed to make the most of an opportunity that was presented by circumstances. James Kirk created new opportunities (for the Trekkies out there, think "Kobyashi Maru"). Picard capitalized on opportunities. When he took risks, he took them decisively. Picard, like Kirk, played a great hand of poker. Kirk was a master at bluffing when he needed to. Picard was just as skilled at playing the hand he was dealt!

It is unlikely that most DSS providers will still be in their current positions the next time there is a major revision in the laws/statutes that govern our work (as there is nothing on the horizon that would suggest such a major shift in the offing). We don't have much influence or any control over the students with disabilities who choose to attend our institutions. While we can make the case for more funds as needed, few of us sit at the table where budget decisions impacting our offices are made. So what kind of opportunities are out there for DSS providers to seize?

Think about how to make the most of what is before you. A new OCR decision mandates significant action for an institution someplace else? Make it count on YOUR campus by making sure that the right people hear about the decision (and are properly impressed, enthused, or scared!). A court case comes down that works against our mission? Don't hide from it – confront it. Make sure that folks on campus know that you are aware of the decision and explain to them in no uncertain terms why the court missed the boat. The school hires a new Residence Life Director? Don't wait for him/her to come calling. Go over and introduce yourself. Set up some time to discuss the kinds of issues you have faced for disabled students in Res Life in the past, and how those were resolved. You just got a new boss (several levels up, but overseeing Disability Services among other things)? Go introduce yourself and explain where/how you think DSS fits into the big scheme of things at the institution (YOU want to be the one to introduce that newcomer to what you are all about; don't let him/her hear about you first from someone else). Still smarting from that stupid decision made and followed by others (as discussed above), when you KNOW it should have gone otherwise? Make it a teachable moment. After the dust settles, have a conversation with all involved as to what happened and why, to try to avoid the same thing happening in the future. On a daily basis there are opportunities presented for you to increase your visibility on campus (and thus your impact), to expand your base of influence, or to establish new and improved collaborative relationships. Seize those opportunities.

We've spent several weeks assessing the positive traits of the fictional crew and captains of the Enterprise, and finding parallels for our work in DSS. The characters were created in someone's mind, but they were created for a reason. They were (and are!) prototypes for the kind of people we might like to be – smart, savvy, capable, sometimes flawed, but ALWAYS striving to do the right thing. I can live with that. I'd like to BE that. How about you?

Janie

*“He’d ensure the safety of his ship and crew
And then complete his mission
And make himself a better person
Bring peace to the galaxy
And do it for free.
Oh, yeah. THAT’S what Captain Picard would do.”*

(From *What Would Captain Picard Do?* by Hank Green)