



**STEP UP TO
SUCCESS**

From the Office of Dr. Linda Burrs

A Postmodern Chicken Little Story

Chicken Little was a postmodern chicken. She enjoyed the freedom to express herself with her friends and sister chickens as they clucked about the barnyard. One day, Chicken Little experienced some cognitive dissonance when an object hit her on the head. Having never experienced this phenomenon, her left-brain interpreter kicked in and deduced that the sky must be falling. As she attempted to make sense of this experience, she felt the need to share with those around her, what she believed was happening. Based on the best empirical evidence available to her at that time, Chicken Little deduced the sky was falling.

Chicken Little spread her theory of the falling sky to everyone she met; Henny Penny, Ducky Lucky, Goosey Loosey, Turkey Lurkey and Foxy Loxy. For the philosophers of the time, this need to share her worldview with so many might be interpreted as her attempting to seek confirmation from others. For Chicken Little, this event had to be as she thought. She had heard it and even felt part of the sky hit her head. In order to help her overcome her psychological and physical discomfort, she felt she needed to warn the king so that they would be able to get the situation rectified and return her world to normal or at least save her from impending doom. Chicken Little's premonition was substantiated in the end but not because they sky was falling.

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Now, had Chicken Little applied some of the principles of critical thinking, she might have asked herself the following questions in an attempt to examine the facts as they were presented to determine, if indeed the sky as initially supposed, was falling.

- Had the sky ever fallen before? (identify assumptions)
- How could the sky possibly fall? What would be the natural causes?
(deductive reasoning)
- If a piece of the sky had fallen, could she see the hole from which it fell
(interpretation of the evidence)
- I wonder what else might have been able to fall from the sky, hit me on the head and I am still living to talk about it? (evaluation of the argument)

Moral of the story: Leaders create the reality of the world they need to believe exists . . . right or wrong. They defend, in any way they can, their closely held assumptions and beliefs about how things *ought* to be. For someone or something to contradict a belief (i.e., finding out it was an acorn) may mean destroying or at least infringing on the belief or concept of who one believes them self to be. For many, this is unacceptable.

Most of us are not usually interested in exploring what makes us uncomfortable...we are however, more interested in keeping the *status quo of our reality*. Leaders (and others) must come to understand how important it is to be open to new realities; even those that we don't want to believe or hear.

What should leaders do? Learn to apply some *Chicken Little Critical Thinking* to our beliefs and values, knowing everyone won't share in them or accept them. Are you a Chicken Little leader closed to other's perspectives and ideas or are you a leader open to new realities and unimaginable possibilities?

Remember this . . . predictability, fear, and denial are the enemies of progress, growth, and creativity!

About Dr. Linda Burrs and Step Up To Success!

Step Up to Success! is a consulting firm that focuses on organizational strategies for leaders, teams and individuals resulting in highly committed, highly energized, and high performing teams. For more than 25 years, Dr. Linda Burrs has brought her rich dynamic approach to the corporate and professional coaching and training arena. The breadth of her experience crosses all walks of social and organizational life including law firms, technology organizations, educators, business professionals, leadership groups and non-profit groups.

Dr. Burrs designs and delivers targeted and successful coaching interventions and programs designed to *measurably improve personal, leadership and organizational performance*. Her experience, enthusiasm, and high energy provide the foundation for your memorable, life-changing, inspirational experience. When you attend a Step Up To Success! Program, you walk away with improved communication skills, better self-management skills, enhanced interpersonal skills and a clearer understanding of your individual strengths and how they contribute to your success both organizationally, professionally, and personally.

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