

Lessons From Dorothy, the Tinman, Scarecrow, & Lion

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The Wizard of Oz is generally thought of as a children's movie, but it is actually a terrific blueprint for building accountability in credit unions. Just as Dorothy, the Lion, Tinman, and Scarecrow had to journey out into the unknown to reach the Emerald City so too must credit unions venture out into the unknown to accomplish their goals. But unlike Dorothy and her friends, credit unions don't believe there are wizards out there who will give them what they want. They know they must make things happen for themselves and the Wizard of Oz offers the following wisdom to help them on their journey.

Toto, We're Not in Kansas Anymore: Credit unions are fully aware they are operating in a new environment with stiffer competition, new markets, sophisticated technology, shifting priorities, and potential risks. Dorothy models some attitudes and behaviors that can serve credit unions well as they enter new territory: she took everything in, stayed open to new experiences, made friends with the locals, found a mentor, and held on to her Ruby Slippers. Her inner strength combined with her flexibility enabled her to succeed in a new environment fraught with obstacles.

We're off to See the Wizard: Credit unions know that staying safe in Munchkinland is not the answer and realize embarking on the journey despite the risks is the only way to reach their Emerald City. Again, Dorothy offers some useful lessons: she ventured out leaving the timid behind, built a team bringing out the best in each member, and set a shared goal repeating it frequently. Everyone knew where they were headed and why.

Follow the Yellow Brick Road: Credit unions that follow the Yellow Brick Road of accountability will be reach their destination no matter what obstacles they encounter along the way. Dorothy and her friends demonstrated a "What Else Can We Do" form of accountability as opposed to the Wicked Witch of the West's "Who Done It" form. Whenever they encountered an obstacle, they asked themselves what else they could do to overcome it and proceed. This is a more productive form of accountability that focuses on the present than the more common "Who Done It" form that focuses on the past.

If I Only Had a Brain, a Heart, the Courage, a Home: So how can credit unions keep people on the Yellow Brick Road of accountability? They can develop the qualities embodied by the four main characters throughout their credit unions: the courage of the lion, the heart of the tinman, the wisdom of the scarecrow, and the determination of Dorothy. Just about everything worth doing involves a significant dose of courage, heart,

wisdom, and determination. These are the qualities that bring out the best in individuals and in credit unions. The more highly they are ingrained in credit union culture, the greater the chances of meeting the challenging demands of the times.

Never Take Off Those Ruby Slippers: Every credit union has its own Ruby Slippers—its own power within that creates its soul and creates its momentum. Sometimes credit unions look so hard outside themselves for answers that they forget to tap into their own inner power to find those answers. Throughout most of the movie, Dorothy possessed the power to go home; she just didn't know it. It was the journey that helped her discover her own strengths and power. Credit unions that take the journey with their Ruby Slippers on will reap the greatest rewards.

There is No Place Like Home: There is no place like a credit union. There is no place else where members can get quality financial services without funding the profits of an organization as they do so. Just because credit unions are journeying off on new adventures doesn't mean they've forgotten what home is all about. Just as Dorothy never lost sight of home throughout the journey, credit unions should never lose sight of the essence of the credit union movement on their journey. The journey will make home even more attractive and meaningful

The Wizard of Oz is a movie for our times filled with lessons that can make credit unions stronger. Never has there been a time when it has been more important to follow the Yellow Brick Road of accountability; to draw on the courage, heart, wisdom, and determination of credit unions; and to tap into the Ruby Slipper power within credit unions. The wisdom from Oz can develop the individual and collective attitudes, skills, and resolve credit unions need to take risks, overcome obstacles, and achieve results. Oz wisdom will take credit unions Somewhere Over the Rainbow to new and exciting places.