

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the OneAmerica employee portal. The URL is <https://portal.oneamerica.com/Pages/coxtoolboxleadership.aspx>. The page header includes the OneAmerica logo, navigation tabs (Home, HR At Your Service, Learning & Dev, Business Resources, What's Going On, Feedback), and a search bar. The article content includes a group photo of employees and a quote from Steve Cox: "People tend to hire people like themselves, but you don't need more of you. You need a team with complementary skills so you can cover all the bases," said Steve Cox, vice president of pricing and product development, pictured with several members of his team. "I need people to cover things I don't do well."

Steve Cox
12/2/2015

The Cox Toolbox, Part 1: Leadership

Joe Pearson, an assistant vice president in individual product development, started working at America United Life in 1978. "In the mid-eighties, a young actuarial student came to work for me," Joe said. "His name was **Steve Cox**." Over the years, Steve developed into his own person, and he and Joe played different OneAmerica roles. Today, things have come full circle: Now Joe works for Steve, who's vice president of pricing and product development. Joe couldn't be happier about it.

"I've worked here 37-odd years," Joe said. "I've had several managers, and as you might imagine, some have been really good, some not as good. Steve is a breath of fresh air."

Joe says Steve goes out of his way to "get" people—to understand them, see where they're coming from, and put them in situations that will help them thrive. Use these ideas from Steve to lead and succeed.



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Put it on paper.

Recently, someone asked me, "Do you have operating principles, and does your team know what they are?" I realized I did, but that I had never put them to paper. So I took half a day and did just that. That gave the people on my team something tangible to understand where I was coming from, and that understanding led to a tighter team.



Knock down the walls.

We work in an open environment on the seventh floor. Once we got the cube walls out of the way, our group's ability to collaborate and make quick decisions really took off. Now younger people and senior people work together at the same table, helping each other and sharing ideas. I never want to have an office again!

“We” are smarter than “me.”

Everybody’s opinion is interesting and important. Create an environment where people feel free to speak up, with an understanding that the leader will make the final decision. This helps energize and empower people and leads to better problem solving.

I’ve got one of me. I need one of you.

People tend to hire people like themselves, but you don’t need more of you. You need a team with complementary skills so you can cover all the bases. I’ve got me covered. I need people to cover things I don’t do well. This can sometimes lead to communication challenges on a team because you’ll have different personality types. As a leader, you need to remind people that you believe in them and what they bring to the table. Celebrate the different personalities on your team and help them learn how to communicate with each other.

Hire Four Es and a P.

This is a leadership concept from [Jack Welch, the former CEO of GE](#). He believes in hiring people with tremendous personal **Energy** who can **Energize** teams, who have a competitive **Edge** and are focused on **Execution** and results. The P is for **Passion**. To me this translates to: Don’t just look for skills, look for attributes. You can teach people a job, but you can’t teach attitude. It’s a lot easier to lead people who are energized and passionate about what they do.

Learn more about Steve Cox.

[Read a Q&A with the 2015 Outstanding Leadership ASPIRE Award winner](#) and learn more about this college basketball star turned OneAmerica exec’s focus, philosophy and affinity for cats.