Servant Leadership

Lynn Breedlove
(with credit to Robert Greenleaf)
Examples of Leadership Styles

- Authoritarian (1-way, downward communication)
- Paternalistic (father figure who takes care of subordinates)
- Laissez-faire (let every member decide for themselves what to do)
- Transactional (lead via a system of rewards and punishments)
The 1970 Pamphlet

The Servant as Leader

By Robert K. Greenleaf
Robert Greenleaf, 1904–1990

- Quaker
- Long time employee of AT&T
- Concerned re the effects of top-down authoritarian leadership
- Founded the Center for Servant Leadership
The Story of Leo

- From Herman Hesse’s *Journey to the East*
- Leo is a servant accompanying a group of men who are taking a stressful trip into unknown territory
- Leo does menial chores, but he also has a strong presence, and he “sustains the group with his sprite and his song”
- All goes well until Leo disappears
- Then the journey is abandoned and the group disbands
Definition of Servant Leadership

- A Servant–Leader is a servant first. The motivation to lead comes from the motivation to serve: the cause, the group, the members.

- The only valid authority of a leader is that which has been granted to the leader by the other members in response to the evident desire and ability of the leader to serve.
“Servant Leadership requires a developing view of other people. People are seen as beings to be trusted, believed in, and loved – not as objects to be used, competed with, or judged.”

Robert Greenleaf

(Servant-leaders are “people-builders”, not “people-users”)

How Servant-Leaders see other people
Key Principles of Servant Leadership

1. See all members (including yourself) as both leaders and followers – create opportunities for everyone to lead and develop their leadership skills.

2. Create a strong sense of teamwork, solidarity and community within the group.

3. Involve all members in decision-making.

4. See yourself as a useful resource to the group.
Small Group Exercise

- In 10 minutes, make a list of as many specific behaviors as you can think of that a Servant-Leader could use to carry out the Key Principles of Servant Leadership.
1. Excellent Listener (including listening to what is NOT said)
   - constantly on the lookout for other people’s best ideas (which requires you to reduce your preoccupation with your own ideas)
   - a deep desire to understand the deeper meaning of what others are saying
12 Characteristics of Servant-Leaders

2. Empathetic Healer
   - strive for deeper understanding of what people need and feel
   - notice when members are stressed, suffering, feeling defeated
   - seek opportunities to validate people’s feelings and help restore them to “wholeness”
12 Characteristics of Servant-Leaders

3. Aware
   – of yourself, your own biases, beliefs and preconceived notions of “the right answer”
   – of subtle dynamics in the group (rivalries, friendships, bruised egos, resentments, etc.)
   – of the underlying values issues
12 Characteristics of Servant–Leaders

4. Persuasive (rather than authoritarian)
   – help people to willingly join the group consensus (which may take time)
   – try to avoid invoking the power of the hierarchy, or imposing majority rule
12 Characteristics of Servant-Leaders

5. Visionary
   – help the group to formulate, clearly articulate, and embrace a bold Vision/Dream for the future
   – model a strong personal belief in the Vision/Dream, and remind people of it
6. Foresight
-the ability to look beyond the short term objective, see the bigger picture, and understand the sequence of steps necessary to achieve the longer term goal
12 Characteristics of Servant-Leaders

7. Stewardship

- recognize that as the leader you have been placed in a position of trust within the organization, which makes you accountable to all the members
12 Characteristics of Servant-Leaders

8. Committed to the growth of each member
   - carry that out one person at a time
   - be patient enough that people can grow into their roles, and allow enough time for good (or great) ideas to emerge from the group
12 Characteristics of Servant-Leaders

9. Build community within the group
   - create socializing opportunities, celebrations, thank you rituals, etc.
   - help people see the connections between their ideas
10. Authentic and vulnerable
   – acknowledge your own biases and pre-conceived notions to the group
   – accept responsibility for your mistakes, errors in judgment, or dropping the ball as soon as you realize you did it; model a willingness to apologize
11. Be useful
   - be willing to do whatever the group needs you to do
   - don’t think of any task as “beneath you”
   - ask people what kind of support they need
   - ask yourself: “What needs to be done, and how will I help to get it done?”
12. Humility

- resist your ego’s desire to control or manipulate the group and take it in the direction you pre-determined
- avoid “You should…” statements (they imply that you think you know best)
- ask “What do you think we should do?”
- admit when you don’t know the answer; that can empower the group to figure it out together
My style is consultative. I want everyone to express their views and that’s why it’s important to have diverse perspectives around the table.

It’s important to understand what people in the organization want. Telling people what to do is really a flawed approach.

New York Times, 5/1/16
Self Assessment: Your Servant Leader Characteristics

– Using the handout, rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Low and 5 = High) on each item
– You can rate your actual style in past situations when you were in a leadership role
  OR
  (if you haven’t been in that role much) how you believe you would act if you were in a leadership role in the future
Self Assessment  Parts 2 & 3

Part 2
– Go back over the list of characteristics and circle 2–3 that are high priorities for you to get better at
– Using the space provided, write down some performance improvement ideas for yourself in those 2–3 areas

Part 3
– Share your ideas with one person sitting close to you
Encouraging Collaboration is a key element of Servant Leadership

- The Key is to create situations when it is mutually beneficial to work together
Collaboration ideally involves:

- a shared vision and goals,
- positive relationships,
- open sharing of information,
- a consensus about strategy,
- a willingness to share the work fairly, and
- an acceptance of each other’s different work styles
Resources on Servant Leadership


- The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership (www.greenleaf.org)