

Servant Leadership

Background: The modern concept of Servant leadership is an approach to leadership development, coined by Robert Greenleaf in the essay "The Servant as Leader" in 1970 and advanced by other authors over the last decade. However, the concept is thousands of years older and stems, at least partly, from Jesus' teachings on leadership.

Greenleaf defined Servant Leadership as: "The servant leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead...The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priorities are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servant? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least not be further deprived?"

Servant-leadership emphasizes the leader's role as *steward* of the resources (human, financial and otherwise) provided by the organization. It encourages leaders to serve others while staying focused on achieving results in line with the organization's values and integrity. It differs from other leadership approaches by emphasizing collaboration, trust, empathy, and the ethical use of power. At heart, the individual is a servant first, making the conscious decision to lead; their drive is to lead because they want to serve better, not because they desire increased power. The objective is to enhance the growth of individuals in the organization and increase teamwork and personal involvement.

Servant leadership is one of the most talked about yet least critically examined leadership philosophies. While many people closely identify with this leadership approach, an equal number are cynical and question whether expectations of leaders are realistic.

Servant leadership is characterized by a belief that leadership development is an on-going, life-long learning process.

Greenleaf and others have identified 11 characteristics of a Servant Leader:

1. Calling First among the characteristics is a calling to serve. Servant leaders have a natural desire to serve others. This notion of having a calling to serve is deeply rooted and value-based. Servant leaders have a desire to make a difference for other people and will pursue opportunities to impact others' lives — never for their own personal gain. This is the characteristic that causes most to question the value of servant leadership. Most of our political and corporate leaders work to their own benefit at the expense of others. Sacrificing self interest is not about giving up your pay or going hungry in your service.

2. Listening Traditionally, leaders have been valued for their communication and decision making skills. Servant leaders make a deep commitment to listening intently to others. They want and value people that share their ideas. Listening also encompasses getting in touch with one's inner voice, and seeking to understand what one's body, spirit, and mind are communicating.

3. Empathy Servant leaders strive to understand and empathize with others circumstances and problems. They can "walk in others' shoes". Servant leaders assume the good intentions of others, even when forced to reject their behavior or performance.

4. Healing Learning to heal is a powerful force for transformation and integration. Servant leaders have developed a remarkable appreciation for the emotional health and spirit of others. They are good at facilitating the healing process and others gravitate toward them when emotional needs arise. The ability to create an environment that encourages emotional mending is crucial for those who want to become great servant leaders.

5. Awareness General awareness, and especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant-leader. Servant leaders have a keen sense of what is happening around them. They continually watch

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for cues from the environment to inform their opinions and decisions. They know what's going on and will rarely be fooled by appearances.

6. Persuasion Servant-leaders rely on persuasion, rather than positional authority in making decisions. They are naturally very persuasive and offer compelling reasons when they make requests. They seek to convince others, rather than coerce compliance. This particular element offers one of the clearest distinctions between the traditional authoritarian model and that of servant-leadership.

7. Conceptualization Servant leaders nurture the ability to conceptualize the world, events, and possibilities. They encourage others to dream great dreams and avoid getting bogged down by day-to-day realities and operations. They foster an environment that encourages thinking big and valuing the creative process. Servant-leaders must seek a delicate balance between conceptualization and day-to-day focus.

8. Foresight Servant leaders have an uncanny ability to anticipate future events. This foresight is a characteristic that enables servant-leaders to understand lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision in the future. They usually anticipate consequences of decisions with great accuracy.

9. Stewardship Servant leaders are often characterized by a strong sense of stewardship. A steward in an organization is responsible for preparing it for its destiny. Making a positive difference in the future is characteristic of the stewardship mentality.

10. Growth of People Servant leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. As such, they are deeply committed to a personal, professional, and spiritual growth of the individuals within their organization.

11. Building Community Servant leaders have a strong sense of community spirit and work hard to foster it in an organization. A servant leader instills a sense of community spirit in the workplace and helps an organization develop and operate as a community. Servant-leaders seek to identify a

means for building community among those who work within a given institution.

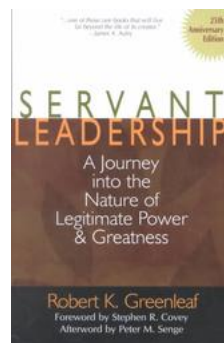
Application:

Facilitators are stealthy process leaders who lead people to discover their desired outcomes and their path to achieving them. They guide the group through process, not through the contribution of content. Their ego is subservient to the team.

Servant Leadership for a facilitator is a practical philosophy of choosing to serve first, and then to lead in order to be of greater service to the team. Facilitators observing Servant Leadership leads teams through collaboration, communication and cooperation enhanced by empowerment.

The facilitator leads participants through their issues without influencing the shape or nature of those issues. The participants "own" the content and the desired outcomes, while the facilitator "designs and manages" the process they use to create success.

Resources:



Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness

Paulist Press, Jan 2002

ISBN-0809105543

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Servant_leadership

<http://www.butler.edu/studentlife/hampton/principles.htm>

NebGuide Article Becoming a Servant Leader: Do You Have What It Takes?

<http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/epublic/live/g1481/build/g1481.pdf>