



SHEETS

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a concept first described by Robert K. Greenleaf who founded the Center for Applied Ethics, which was later renamed the Robert K. Greenleaf Center. Greenleaf's definition of servant leadership is:

- Putting one's natural feeling to serve first, then consciously choosing to lead.
- "The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant – first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served... do those served grow as persons; do they while being served, become healthier, wiser, more free, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?" (On Becoming a Servant Leader, Greenleaf, p. 2)
- "...what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived?" (The Servant as Leader, Greenleaf, p. 7)

10 KEY CHARACTERISTICS

1. Listening receptively to what others have to say and keeping an open mind.
2. Having empathy for all in the group and accepting their right to share their ideas to encourage a more open hearing of opposing viewpoints.
3. Honing foresight and intuition to bridge information gaps and to foresee the unforeseeable.
4. Being aware and perceptive and understanding of the needs of the group.
5. Having highly developed powers of persuasion and depending upon the follower's confidence in their vision and direction.

MYTHS

Much of the need for servant leadership – to identify it, anyway – has come from some "myths" that people have come to believe in their lives. They include:

- Public life is something only for celebrities and politicians.
- Public life is filled only with conflict and competes with my private life.
- I must sacrifice my self-interest for the common good.

Because these myths emphasize separateness and an us vs. them scenario, they underscore an underlying problem in our country. Above and beyond crime, drugs, prejudice, homelessness, "we as a people don't know how to come together to solve (our) problems." (Lappé, Du Bois, p. 9)

Servant leadership can help dispel these myths and bring us together to solve our nation's and the world's problems. Because of its emphasis on leadership of the people, not to the people, it works to develop an empowered mentality in those who used to question their ability to make a difference.

The concept of servant leadership is gaining popularity among for-profit and not-for-profit companies, as well as in community leadership programs, formal leadership-management courses, independent consultants and in higher education. Some have compared this concept to turning the traditional hierarchical pyramid upside-down so that in the minds of those formally at the top of the pyramid, the first priority will be the needs of his or her employees, customers or the community which he or she is serving.

6. Articulating concepts and goals well to keep the group attuned to mutual objectives.
7. Exerting a healing influence upon individuals and institutions when dissension develops.
8. Building community in the group or workplace and encouraging the individuals' own self development and growth.
9. Practicing the art of contemplation and routinely reviewing one's own goals and vision and those of the group.
10. Recognizing that servant leadership begins with the desire to change oneself.

ESSENTIAL PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Change agent
- Trustworthy
- Good follower
- Visionary
- Ability to cope with uncertainty
- Future-oriented
- Ownership of problems

Greenleaf, R.K., *The Servant as Leader*, Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership, 1970.

Greenleaf, R.K., *On Becoming a Servant Leader*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1996.

Lippé, F.M. and DuBois, P.M., *The Quickening of America*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1994.

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