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SERVANT LEADERSHIP

What is servant leadership? Servant leadership is a philosophy, not a model, for leadership. There are generally 10 or 11 characteristics of servant leadership that make up the guiding principles. We use 11 characteristics here, with "calling" as the extra characteristic. Typically, these characteristics are behavioral in nature and therefore learnable. Below is a brief description of each.

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|----------------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| • Calling | • Listening | • Empathy | • Healing | • Awareness |
| • Persuasion | • Conceptualization | • Foresight | • Stewardship | • Growth |
| • Building Community | | | | |

Calling

Do you feel compelled to serve others? This characteristic is about feeling compelled to put others needs in front of one's own and sacrificing one's own self-interest for the good of others (or organization). Some say this is an innate (hard-wired) trait and is not learnable.

Listening

Listening is a skill which allows the listener to understand from the talker's perspective what is being communicated. Ideally, listening without prejudice, from the other's perspective, not mentally defending one's position while the other is talking, without interruptions, and asking questions for understanding/clarity.

From our perspective and our coaching experience, this is one of the most important characteristics and underlies almost all of the other characteristics of servant leadership. If one doesn't or can't actively listen, the other characteristics have no foundation of support.

Empathy

D.M. Berger, M.D. (psychiatrist) describes empathy as, *"The capacity to know emotionally what another is experiencing from within the frame of reference of that other person, the capacity to sample the feelings of another or to put one's self in another's shoes."*

Empathy tied to having emotional quotient/emotional IQ/emotional intelligence (essentially an awareness of self and others and how what is going on around us affects us) and is not the same as sympathy.

Healing

Healing is defined (by dictionary.reference.com) as making healthy, whole or sound again. This characteristic is about being approachable when someone has had something happen that was difficult or traumatic. The individual views the servant leader as someone who is willing and able to provide an environment which can be healing to the injured individual.



Awareness

A servant leader demonstrates awareness when they have insight into their own, and others around them, behaviors and relational habits and how those behaviors and habits interact with others. Awareness is tied to empathy, yet is not the same. Emotional intelligence is about awareness and is considered by many to be a major trait/characteristic for successful leadership.

Persuasion

Being persuasive is about influencing (inspiring) others to do what is needed. This characteristic is about people following by choice due to desire versus fear; it is not about manipulation. A servant leader earns respect by their actions, not by demanding it because of rank or position of power.

Conceptualization

Creating an environment that encourages others to feel free to articulate their vision/ideas is conceptualization. Servant leaders believe in conceptualization as it gives others (and encourages) the opportunity to bring their ideas out in the open and create the space for greater success in the organization.

Foresight

Foresight refers to the ability to look to the future and predict with greater than 50% accuracy (better than luck) what the trends are going to be. It uses the present and intuition to bridge the past to the future. The servant leader does not do this in a void of emotion, as any decision made with logic alone can be dangerous.

Stewardship

Stewardship is about taking responsibility (guardianship) over someone else's property and cares for it as if it were his/her own. This can be demonstrated by answering the following question: How can you prepare the organization for the future in a positive manner? The servant leader is concerned with the future and the affect that s/he has on the future of the organization.

Growth

Individuals around a servant leader know through the actions of the servant leader, that their professional and personal growth is a true concern to the servant leader. Robert Greenleaf indicated that growth is important to a servant leader as they understand that individuals have more to offer than just the tangible contributions made at work. Because of this, Greenleaf said that the servant leader is committed to the growth of individuals.

Building a Community

Where ever there is a community, people in that community feel they belong to that community. This characteristic provides a sense of belonging for people, which in turn provides a purpose, and in part, something to which they can identify. People were meant to be in relationship, and when in relationship, can be much stronger than when on an island by themselves.

As one reads through these characteristics, hopefully more questions were raised than answered. If you remember, mentioned above was that servant leadership is not a model, but a philosophy of being. We encourage you to search out more information on servant leadership. A good starting place is the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership (www.greenleaf.org). They have plenty of information on servant leadership and have a free newsletter that is sent regularly to those who ask for it.