

FINDING YOUR VOICE AS A LEADER
Theresa M. "Terry" Valiga, EdD, RN, CNE, ANEF, FAAN

ATI NATIONAL NURSE EDUCATOR SUMMIT
APRIL 2022

COMPARING LEADERS/LEADERSHIP AND MANAGERS/MANAGEMENT

LEADERS/LEADERSHIP	ELEMENT	MANAGERS/MANAGEMENT
	POSITION	
	POWER BASE	
	GOALS & VISIONS	
	INNOVATIVE IDEAS	
	RISK LEVEL	
	DEGREE OF ORDER	
	NATURE OF ACTIVITIES	
	FOCUS	
	PERSPECTIVE	
	DEGREE OF "FREEDOM"	
	ACTIONS	

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SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLS

CliftonStrengths Assessment

<https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/home.aspx>

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) Assessment

<https://www.ihhp.com/free-eq-quiz/>

How Good Are Your Leadership Skills?

https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_50.htm

Implicit Association Test

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

Leadership Blind Spot Assessment

https://www.oreilly.com/library/view/leadership-blindspots-how/9781118646298/21_res-b.html

Leadership Competency Checklist

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c3bd/d02d214e9c0d6d090d6c12bc6811b61dcb72.pdf>

Leadership Characteristics & Skill Assessment

Grossman & Valiga, 2021, pages 39-44

Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI)

<https://www.leadershipchallenge.com/try-lpi.aspx>

Leadership Self-Assessment Tool

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/413-leadership-self-assessment-tool>

MindTools Leadership Skills Assessment

<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/leadership-style-quiz.htm>

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

<https://www.mbtionline.com/>

Optimal Thinking Leadership Assessment

<https://www.optimalthinking.com/business-optimization/leadership-assessment/>

Performing Under Pressure Assessment

<https://www.ihhp.com/free-performing-under-pressure-quiz-1/>

Personal Effectiveness Tips

<https://www.linkedin.com/learning/personal-effectiveness-tips>

Strengths Deployment Inventory

<https://totalsdi.com/assessments/overview/>

Trusted Leader Self-Assessment

http://www.centerforleading.com/assessments_trust.shtml

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MENTORS ... PROTEGES ... THE MENTORING EXPERIENCE

WHAT IS A MENTOR?

- Wise & faithful guardian & tutor
- An accomplished, experienced adult who guides & befriends an inexperienced adult
- Close, trusted counselor or guide
- Prudent advisor, teacher, sponsor, guide
- Mixture of good parent & good friend
- Enhancer of professional skills & intellectual development
- Someone who represents a point of development to which the neophyte aspires

WHAT DO MENTORS DO?

- Provide counsel & moral support during stress
- Provide encouragement during risk-taking endeavors
- See potential in the neophyte (which she often does not see in herself)
- Encourage
- Cajole
- Test
- Scold
- Teach
- Consult
- Model
- Sponsor
- Inspire neophytes to a level of professionalism, a degree of compassion, a depth of humor, & a height of empathy they would not otherwise have known
- Commit themselves to the neophytes
- Nurture a belief in self
- Foster growth in personal & professional power
- Support & facilitate the realization of the neophytes' dreams
- Act as a sounding board
- Allow the authority of the neophyte to emerge
- Give praise
- Act as an energize
- Foster risk-taking skills
- Create career opportunities
- Open doors
- Serve as a source of inspiration & stimulation
- Create competence

- Protect
- Advocate for neophytes
- Believe in neophytes
- Aid in the socialization of neophytes
- Engage in a mutually-supportive relationship
- Invite novices into their worlds as peers & colleagues
- Help neophytes to ...
 - “Learn the ropes”
 - Sense the political climate
 - Spot the behind-the-scene action ... the skeletons & mine fields in an organization
 - Gain insights into the field
 - “Test out” their decisions & positions

MYTHS ABOUT MENTORS/MENTORING

- The best way to succeed is to have a mentor
- Mentoring is always beneficial
- The mentor should be older than the person being mentored
- A person can have only one mentor at a time
- If you are seeking a mentor, you have to wait to be asked
- When a man mentors a woman, the chances are great that it will develop into a sexual encounter
- Women do not make good mentors

WHAT DO YOU WANT IN A MENTOR?

- Someone with professional experience, self-worth, & autonomy
- Someone in prominent, perhaps powerful, positions
- Risk-taker ... courageous
- Positive role model
- Intelligent
- Articulate
- Confident
- Committed to the profession ... & passionate about it
- Scholarly
- Somewhat charismatic
- Caring
- Expert in their field
- Able to give “negative” feedback in a positive way

ADVICE: Look for someone you know is in a position to help you get things done, let them know you respect their ability, & seek their support.

KEEP IN MIND: There needs to be some kind of “chemistry” between mentor & protégé.

WHAT DOES A MENTOR LOOK FOR IN A PROTÉGÉ?

- Intelligence
- Interest in the field or sub-specialty (& TEACHING is a sub-specialty !!!)
- A self-starter
- A hard worker
- Someone looking for new challenges
- A risk-taker
- Someone with good interpersonal & communication skills
- Someone with a curious mind
- Someone who has & understands ideas
- Someone with integrity
- Someone with a sense of humor
- Someone with good appearance
- Someone worth investing in
- Someone who will show some measure of return
- Someone with the potential to move the profession forward
- Someone worth the investment of the time & energy required to help “mold” someone they believe could be a future leader
- Someone who will take on personal responsibility for learning

STAGES OF A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

- Dependence
- Uncertainty & hesitancy
- Mutual give-&-take
- Termination
 - Protégé is independent
 - Protégé identifies own separateness
 - Protégé may exceed the mentor’s accomplishment

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Leading Like John Lewis: 4 Pillars of Leadership

by Alaina Love

SmartBrief ... July 27, 2020

https://www.smartbrief.com/original/2020/07/leading-john-lewis-4-pillars-leadership?utm_source=brief

I am fortunate to be the parent of a child who graduated from university in the pre-COVID era. Watching my son participate in a commencement ceremony at Yale, the rite of passage after four years of intense study, was both a privilege and a pleasure.

For the uninitiated, attending a Yale commencement feels a lot like being an extra in a scene from “Game of Thrones,” where the streets are filled with people and pageantry. All around the extensive campus, the roads are closed to vehicular traffic, creating safe passage for thousands of graduates from all 13 schools in the university to process toward Old Campus.

They are led by a marching band and professors in full regalia, while bystanders, family and friends crane their necks from the sidewalks for a glimpse of their student, waving wildly when that person is spotted in the crowd.

The procession eventually spills into the quad at Old Campus, where soon-to-be graduates are greeted by 15,000 applauding loved ones and an orchestra that heralds their arrival. It’s a heady experience, to say the least.

The day of this graduation, Yale conferred honorary degrees on a number of accomplished luminaries including former Secretary of State John Kerry and Grammy-winning songwriter Stevie Wonder. Yet, it was witnessing Lewis receive a doctorate of laws degree that was the most profound moment of them all.

Lewis waited patiently on the stage for his turn to be hooded and receive his degree. When his name was finally called, the entire audience, on stage and off, leapt to their feet, the crowd unphased by the steady rain that had begun, dampening clothing and seats but not their spirits. Deafening and prolonged cheers rang out from every direction, and I saw more than a few misty eyes in the crowd.

People of all social and political stripes recognized that they were in the presence of greatness. This humble man, slight in stature, turned to the audience with a face full of love and acceptance, strength and gentleness. We all knew that John Lewis was the giant among us.

While millions are mourning his passing, we might best be served by remembering the lessons in leadership that his life represented and seek to emulate his good example. Lewis came from modest beginnings, the son of sharecroppers, a background that imbued him with the character that shaped him as a leader.

Four important pillars of leadership were revealed by his actions throughout his life:

1. Principles and Values are Timeless

As a young man, Lewis was introduced to the principle of nonviolent protest, which was underscored by an important value: that one should show love to individuals who might be thought of as enemies. He carried these principles and values throughout his lifetime, from his early years protesting segregated lunch counters in Nashville to staging sit-ins in Congress in 2016 to fight for gun-control legislation.

While participating in lunch counter sit-ins, Lewis was subjected to hot coffee and condiments being dumped on his head and cigarettes being extinguished on his body, but his response as he later recounted was to “accept the way of peace, the way of love, as a way of living, not just a technique.”

Lewis taught us to **stand for something, and to make our position on what we value unequivocally clear by our actions.** For most of us, demonstrating principled leadership and honoring our values is far less risky within the confines of an organization than they were at a lunch counter.

2. Dare to Disrupt

Lewis’ life is a testament to **the power of building a coalition of committed people to achieve essential change in the world and possessing the courage required to do so.** As a college student in 1965, he was the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and organized a peaceful voting rights march of 600 unarmed people across the Edmund Pettus Bridge from Selma to Montgomery in Alabama.

The protest soon turned violent as Alabama state troopers armed with clubs, whips and tear gas descended on the marchers in what would later become known as “Bloody Sunday.” Seventeen people were hospitalized and 50 treated for injuries in their attempt to cross that bridge, Lewis among them. He was bludgeoned with a billy club at the hands of a state trooper and rendered unconscious with a concussion.

Shortly after that protest, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Voting Rights Act of 1965 for which Lewis and others had been marching.

“**Find a way to get in the way,**” he said in recent years. “**Find a way to get in trouble, good trouble, necessary trouble. Be prepared to speak up and speak out, be courageous. When you see something that’s not right, not fair, not just, you have a moral obligation to get in the way and make some noise.**” Clearly, he lived by his own advice. Over the course of his life, the civil rights icon was arrested at least 45 times for protesting for change and equality, a fact that he wore as a badge of honor.

3. Align with Others Who Inspire You

Large-scale sustained change requires persistence, a reality that Lewis understood. He spent more than 50 years of his life working to reform a system of social injustice in this country that he viewed as scourge on the promise that is America’s grand experiment in democracy. His **resilience in navigating the often-tortuous path to change** would have been far more difficult without role models, individuals who had been on the journey before him and could teach him what was possible.

For Lewis, meeting Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks were pivotal moments that inspired him to contribute in ways he may not have imagined without those encounters. “They inspired me to get into trouble,” said Lewis.

That led to his participation as one of the 13 original Freedom Riders in 1961 and his distinction as the youngest person to speak at the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington, on the day of King’s now famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

Lewis could have been indelibly marked with resentment when King was assassinated 1968, followed two months later by Robert F. Kennedy, on whose presidential campaign Lewis worked. Instead, he was inspired by King’s good example. “He taught me to be hopeful, to be optimistic, to never get lost in despair, to never become bitter, and to never hate,” Lewis reflected.

4. Legacy Matters

Receiving a Stage 4 pancreatic cancer diagnosis late last year was perhaps one fight Lewis knew that he might not win. Regardless, he pressed on over the final months of his life seeking to inspire a new generation of activists for racial justice, encouraging them to “get into good trouble” as he has done.

Lewis became a bridge, linking the individuals and experiences of his generation with today’s proponents for social change, bringing the lessons of the past to illuminate the realities of the present. His legacy is perhaps best summed up in his own reflections in this video, and with these words:

“We must use this moment to recommit ourselves to do all we can to finish the work. There is still work left to be done. Get out there and push and pull until we redeem the soul of America.”

I hope that many will accept his challenge.

Alaina Love is CEO of Purpose Linked Consulting and co-author of “The Purpose Linked Organization: How Passionate Leaders Inspire Winning Teams and Great Results” (McGraw-Hill). She is a recovering HR executive, a global speaker and leadership expert, and passionate about everything having to do with, well ... passion. Her passion archetypes are Builder, Transformer and Healer. When she’s not working with her Fortune 500 client base, Love is busy writing her next book, “Passionality, The Art and Science of Finding Your Passion and Living Your Bliss,” which explores the alignment of personality, purpose and passion, and the science of how it contributes to our well being

Why the Best Leaders Know How to Be Vulnerable

by LaRae Quay

SMARTBRIEF ... June 17, 2020

https://www.smartbrief.com/original/2020/06/why-best-leaders-know-how-be-vulnerable?utm_source=brief

When people meet me, they expect me to have the kind of bravado that is portrayed by FBI agents on TV and in movies -- confident, with no signs of weakness or vulnerability. Nothing could be further from the truth!

It's true that the most successful agents I worked alongside were brave, but it wasn't the bluster that shoves people out of their way or abuses power. Nor was it the detachment that keeps emotions on a tight leash.

The best leaders are those who have the courage to be themselves. They have the courage to be transparent and vulnerable. To many people, the idea of vulnerability sounds a bit touchy-feely. It's been associated with those who are weak and submissive, but vulnerability is not for wimps because it requires us to move through our fears.

I mean the big, scary fears that we'd rather avoid because they make us feel vulnerable! We are afraid of situations freighted with uncertainty, emotions we can't control, and challenges that produce a sudden lack of confidence. It's tempting to run away from our fears because they're both uncomfortable and unpredictable.

This is what I learned from FBI training: Understanding our fears gives us the confidence to move forward. Courage is the product of our vulnerability, not our strengths. The possibility of greatness opens up when we prepare to move through our fears; in other words, allow ourselves to be vulnerable.

Too often, it is much easier to settle for highly functioning mediocrity in our life rather than to risk exposure to criticism and the possibility of failure.

And yet vulnerability is not a topic most people want to talk about. Our culture has trained us to hide our vulnerabilities, especially if we want to climb the corporate ladder.

Here is why the best leaders know how to be vulnerable:

1. **Builds Genuine Social Connections**

Brene Brown argues that vulnerability and authenticity lie at the root of human connection. Unfortunately, real human connection is often missing from a "look at me" culture represented by the number of our Instagram likes. Many of us see ourselves as the driver behind our personal destiny and immune to the needs of people around us.

While there may not be many positives from the coronavirus lockdown mandates that kept us in isolation for weeks, one of them has been a renewed appreciation for human connection.

In his book, "Social," scientist Matthew Lieberman states that our need to connect is as fundamental as our need for food and water. In an interview with *Scientific American*, Lieberman explained how humans around the world use pain language to describe social pain ("she broke my heart," "he hurt my feelings").

The things that cause us to feel pain are things that evolution taught us were a threat to our survival. Evolution has treated social connection as a necessity, not a luxury.

Oftentimes, genuine social connection is polluted by our attempts to project an image of confidence, competence and authority when in public. When this happens, we don't allow ourselves to be authentic and vulnerable.

While we might let down to a spouse or close friend in private, when we think someone important is watching, most of us are very careful to preserve an image that might have taken years to hone.

The joke is on us, however, because our brains are wired to read others in a manner that is automatic and so rapid that we don't even register the process. One of my colleagues once said, "It's not what you do, it's how you look doing it."

People leak all sorts of important information about themselves by what they say and what they don't say. Parts of our brain not only read this information, they also mimic the behavior of the other person. This is called mirroring. We subconsciously try to build rapport with others by imitating their mannerisms, posture and non-verbals.

This can be counterproductive because, if the information we receive from people is inaccurate and inauthentic, it's impossible to build a relationship built on trust.

How to make it work for you: One very effective way to convey vulnerability is by showing forgiveness to others. Kim Cameron points out that a culture of forgiveness in organizations leads to employee productivity because it breeds trust. Forgiveness doesn't mean tolerance for mistakes; rather it builds a patient nurturing of growth.

2. Relies on Values-based Leadership

People feel more comfortable around someone who is authentic and vulnerable. The reason is simple: They know it's a lot safer to trust a person who lives a life measured by values rather than success.

Even if you can't identify your own values, you're inspired by people who have their act together. People whose life isn't a wasteland of YouTube videos and reruns of "Keeping Up with The Kardashians." People who live by values that provide their life with meaning can inspire you to get off your lazy butt and search for your own North Star.

Authentic people aren't afraid to be vulnerable, honest and transparent. In return, their colleagues may respond in positive and constructive ways and generate feelings of hope and trust. It produces a spiral effect where everyone gets ahead.

How to make it work for you: It's time to ditch the old sink-or-swim approach to leadership, whether it's in the home or at the office. Try something radical -- kindness. Here's what may happen: People will see you as a human being who struggles with life just like everyone else. They might feel closer to you, and even ask your advice!

The reason? You've made them feel respected, and this encourages that important personal connection.

3. Eliminates the Hot Air in the Room

Vulnerability requires a quality that's become rare in recent years -- ethics. Ethics are a system of moral principles that can trace their concept from religion, philosophy and ancient cultures.

Ethics guide our behavior; if we're greedy and selfish, we're bankrupt in the ethics department because we lack the decency to consider what is good for society. The distinction between right and wrong depends on the circumstances and whether we'll profit from the decision. Forget the poor slob who end up as collateral damage on our way to top.

Ethics require the courage to be vulnerable enough that you admit your mistakes. You know what you're good at, and possess the self-awareness to recognize those areas that need improvement. In other words, you're mature enough to admit you're not perfect.

This is about the time you begin to have little or no patience with the BSer in the room. You know the one I mean, the person who's full of hot air and makes excuses for poor performance and bad choices. This person has no relationship with ethics because they aren't truthful with themselves or others.

How to make it work for you: First and foremost, don't be the one in the room who's full of hot air! While you may fool some of the people some of the time, you'll never fool all the people all the time.

The smirks behind your back might be covered with a hand or a fat paycheck. But, if you want to earn the respect of people around you, allow yourself to be both honest and vulnerable. Become a wise person with a set of values, not a rich one with no code of ethics.

LaRae Quy was an FBI undercover and counterintelligence agent for 24 years. She exposed foreign spies and recruited them to work for the US government. As an FBI agent, she developed the mental toughness to survive in environments of risk, uncertainty, and deception. Quy is the author of "Secrets of a Strong Mind" and "Mental Toughness for Women Leaders: 52 Tips to Recognize and Utilize Your Greatest Strengths." If you'd like to find out if you are mentally tough, get her free 45-question Mental Toughness Assessment (<https://mentaltraininginc.com/services/mental-toughness-test>).

Self-Leadership Is Self-Awareness

by Laurie Ruettimann

<https://laurieruettimann.com/self-leadership-self-awareness/>

Accessed November 20, 2019

If there's one thing that HR leaders could teach in 2020 to improve the work environment, it's self-leadership.

Call me old-fashioned, but **there's no leadership without self-leadership**. To lead others, you must lead yourself.

You can't be a boss, a founder, an entrepreneur, or even a useful adult without taking care of yourself first, prioritizing your wellbeing, and trying to live a life with integrity.

What is self-leadership? Some say there are three components: self-awareness of personal values, self-awareness of intentions and behavior, and self-awareness of your perspective. Self-leadership, at its core, is self-awareness.

Self-Awareness of Personal Values

Self-leaders have a set of personal values that guide their interactions in the world. They've done the hard work of getting to know themselves, and strive to create a life where **mindset informs their words and deeds**.

The way to develop personal values is to become self-aware. Get to know yourself on a deeper level. Interview yourself, journal, talk to a therapist or meet with a counselor who can help you develop a stronger and more vivid sense of self. After all, **you can't lead others — including yourself — if you're not crystal clear on important facets of your personality like preferences, communication style, values, and expectations**.

Self-Awareness of Intentions and Behaviors

Self-leaders say what they mean and mean what they say. They've clarified what's important in life, aligned their actions with their goals and values, and have cleared the emotional and physical calendar of anything that gets in the way.

When something goes wrong, self-leaders **don't blame people or look to others to solve problems**. They look to themselves first. There's **inner confidence that comes from having done the hard work of aligning philosophies and actions in the first place**.

Self-Awareness of Personal Perspective

Life can be hard. Work presents us with difficult problems to solve. Everybody has a bad day. **Self-leaders are emotionally regulated individuals who don't panic, ruminate, or fantasize. There is only one direction in life, and that's forward**. When the world falls apart, self-leaders aren't looking for answers

from other people. They're ready to go with problem-solving techniques because they've meditated, journaled, and invested in continuous learning to gain insight into themselves and human behavior. Self-awareness is the core of self-leadership

Summary

Work looks a lot different in 2020 if we help our workforce solve their problems and free up leaders to focus on strategic and creative endeavors.

The act of knowing and leading yourself is more art than science, but it starts with a natural curiosity. Try asking yourself:

- What am I good at?
- What exhausts me?
- What is the most important thing in my life?
- Who do I love?
- What stresses me out?
- What's my definition of success?
- What type of worker am I?
- How do I want others to see me?
- What type of person do I want to be?
- What things do I value in life?

Does it feel awkward to be self-aware?

Possibly at first.

But self-leadership requires that you be an expert in your thoughts and behaviors before you attempt to help others in this world.

So, go slow. Self-leaders are endlessly curious, and they're not afraid of the unknown and undiscovered. And, once you begin the journey of self-awareness, you quickly learn that 99% of your colleagues are light years behind and waiting for someone like you to take the lead and teach them how to become self-aware, themselves.

That's what total leadership in 2020 is all about.

How to Become a Better Servant Leader

by Bob Vanourek and Gregg Vanourek

TRIPLE CROWN LEADERSHIP ... January 20, 2022

<https://triplecrownleadership.com/how-to-become-a-better-servant-leader/>

Decades ago, Robert Greenleaf articulated one of the most important leadership frameworks in history: “servant leadership.” Greenleaf described the essence of this counterintuitive approach here:

“The servant leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions.” -Robert Greenleaf

According to this framework, the only people who can determine if you’re a leader are those who freely and knowingly choose to follow you. So, paradoxically, the power to determine if you’re a leader, not just a “boss,” comes from willing followers. Begrudging compliance from those who fear punishment, or who seek rewards, is the opposite of what true servant leaders aim for.

Will people willingly follow you? Yes, if they believe you will serve them (and if you demonstrate character and competence). So, how can you become a better servant leader?

10 Key Practices of a Servant Leader

First, let’s articulate what servant leadership means, with the help of Larry Spears in his book, *Focus on Leadership: Servant-Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* (co-edited with Michele Lawrence and Ken Blanchard). Here are the ten key practices of servant leaders:

1. **Listening**: acknowledging the viewpoint of followers and validating these perspectives.
2. **Empathy**: standing in the shoes of others and seeing things from their point of view.
3. **Healing**: in helping followers become whole, servant leaders are themselves healed.
4. **Awareness**: understanding oneself and the impact one has on others.
5. **Persuasion**: creating change through gentle, nonjudgmental argument.
6. **Conceptualization**: being a visionary for an organization.
7. **Foresight**: predicting what is coming based on the present and the past.
8. **Stewardship**: carefully managing the people and organization—and holding the organization in trust for the greater good of society.
9. **Commitment to the Growth of People**: treating followers as unique and worthy, with intrinsic value beyond what they contribute to the organization.
10. **Building Community**: helping followers identify with something greater than themselves.

With those key practices in mind, here we expand on these practices and flesh out how to become a better servant leader, drawing on other leadership theories and frameworks, including our own “triple crown leadership” model.



Control your ego. While your ego seeks to protect you from threats, it also drives you to serve yourself selfishly, accumulate power, and try to control people. Such ego-driven behavior is self-defeating. Take control of your ego. How? Commit to serving others and recognize that it's not all about you.

*"The goal of many leaders is to get people to think more highly of the leader.
The goal of a great leader is to help people to think more highly of themselves." -J. Carla Northcutt*

Set your moral compass. Build your ethical foundation by defining worthy and memorable personal values to guide your behavior. Then, commit to live by those values and make amends when you fall short.

Define your purpose. Reflect upon why you exist and what gives you a sense of meaning and significance. Seek to live intentionally by taking purposeful action in the world.

Be humble. Demonstrate your humility through your behavior and approach. Humility can't be claimed, only revealed by your actions.

Learn continuously. Learn from your colleagues by spending time with them and listening to their stories, ideas, and aspirations. Be curious. Read. Listen to podcasts. Take course. Attend events that stretch your mind.

Care about people. Genuinely care for others, even with all their imperfections. We all have flaws. Be a giver, not a taker. Be thoughtful and compassionate with others, while constructively holding them accountable.

"The true price of leadership is the willingness to place the needs of others above your own. Great leaders truly care about those they are privileged to lead and understand that the true cost of the leadership privilege comes at the expense of self-interest." -Simon Sinek, Leaders Eat Last

Know yourself. We can easily fall prey to self-deception. Enhance your self-awareness and emotional intelligence. Be empathetic with others. Pay close attention to the impact you have on others. Solicit honest and regular feedback from trusted advisors. Use 360-degree reviews, mentors, and coaches. Find sanctuary. Periodically withdraw to your safe and quiet places and engage in peaceful, reflective practices to renew yourself.

Communicate Wisely

Listen first. Speaking first can shut down the thoughts and ideas of others. Practice listening more than speaking.

Ask questions. Encourage others to share their concerns, thoughts, and ideas. Ask open-ended questions, genuinely seeking input and remaining open to new ideas.

Persuade. Telling people what to do shuts them down. It's best to create agreement, change, and progress through patient, respectful dialogue. Constructively challenge ideas, not the person voicing them.

Be vulnerable. People know that nobody has all the answers. Acknowledge your limitations. When you're wrong, admit it. Ask people for their help and guidance. People will amaze you with their support.

Acknowledge reality. Leaders openly tell the truth about the circumstances faced, no matter how dire, while expressing a rock-solid belief in people's capacity to overcome challenges, and while also describing a way forward.

Proven Servant Leadership Practices

Set Stirring Aspirations:

- Elicit a Shared Purpose. Collaboratively develop a short, memorable, and inspiring organizational purpose about "why" your organization exists. People hunger to feel meaning in their work.
- Elicit Shared Values: Collaboratively develop a memorable set of sacrosanct beliefs to guide people's behavior. Shared values define "how" people should perform. (Tip: One value should be some form of ethical behavior.)
- Elicit a Shared Vision. Collaboratively develop an exciting and inspiring image of your ideal future. It will motivate people to stretch beyond their current capacities. Vision is "where" all of you dream to be someday.

Create Achievable Strategies and Goals:

- Commit to a long-term, overarching ideal for the kind of organization you aspire to be. For example, "an excellent, ethical, and enduring organization."
- Create long-term value for all stakeholders. Balance the need for short-term achievements to survive without sacrificing your more essential long-term objectives.
- Set appropriate goals and incentives. Ensure goals have reasonable stretch targets but are achievable. Ensure compensation incentives do not tempt unethical performance.

Serve People Who Will Serve Each Other:

- Seek "head and heart." Recruit and promote people who are servant leaders and who have integrity, passion, and the requisite skills.
- Stay in touch with people. Isolated leaders lack the input they need to succeed. Connect with all your stakeholders often. You'll learn valuable insights.
- Trust first. Leaders go first by trusting others on reasonable tasks and then extending more or less trust based on the results. Trust in each other is essential for success.

- Develop people. You can best serve people by helping them grow and develop as leaders and followers. The best way to learn leadership is through experience, so the best way to develop your people as leaders is to give them experience leading manageable projects with light coaching.
- Proactively build a winning culture. A great culture is a force multiplier. Keep culture on everyone's agenda. Ask colleagues to help visualize and form your mutually desired culture. Give everyone two jobs: first, their regular job, and second, a job as a "steward for the culture, with an irrevocable license to lead by the shared values."
- Use a fluid structure. Employ temporary, empowered teams outside your formal organization structure to address opportunities often.
- Celebrate liberally. Recognize people and have fun with your associates. They're your trusted colleagues. Life's too short to be uptight.
- Seek servant-leader board members. Board members and senior advisors must also be committed to the principles of servant leadership, as well as the aspirations of the organization, while proactively helping the leadership team be successful.

Demonstrate Servant Leadership by Example:

- Flex between what we call "steel and velvet." Get beyond your natural leadership style, flexing between the hard and soft edges of leadership, depending on the people and situation, but always anchored in the shared values. In "velvet" mode, leaders are on the soft edge, focusing on collaboration, relationships, and stewardship. They use persuasion, not position power. By using velvet, leaders empower colleagues to become fellow leaders and co-creators. "Steel" mode requires confidence, discipline, and toughness. It involves getting results, executing through the hierarchy, and committing to tough decisions and forceful actions. Use steel sparingly—especially to defend the organization's commitment to becoming excellent, ethical, and enduring (the "triple crown leadership quest").
- Lead and follow. Be comfortable following at times, depending on the situation and the people involved. You don't have to always lead everything. Relinquish the leadership mantle to someone with special expertise or passion for a project. That leader doesn't displace you. They lead on that project. In the process, they're developing their leadership skills.

Summary

There are many ways to become a better servant leader. Here are three things to keep in mind as you apply yourself to that worthy end:

1. *Business, leadership, and life are all about relationships.*
2. *It's all about them, not you.*
3. *Serve others, and you'll live a life worth living.*

How to know if you're doing it well? For that, take Greenleaf's big test:

"The best test is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?" -Robert Greenleaf

Postscript: Quotations on Servant Leadership

- “Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.” –Martin Luther King, Jr.
- “The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become a servant.” -Max DePree, former CEO, Herman Miller Company, author, *Leadership Is an Art*
- “Servant leadership is a counterbalance to the glorification, deification, and lionization of leaders who have neglected or forgotten what they are there for. Greenleaf’s work is like a superego conscience prod to remind leaders of why they are there. It is so easy for organizations to get totally consumed with the bottom line, with financial stakeholders, and not with the workers, not with all the clawed cartography of people whose lives are affected by the organization.” -Warren Bennis
- “There is something subtle communicated to one who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between servant-leader and led, is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something they share.” -Robert Greenleaf
- “Your company exists not to make money. Your company exists to advance something, to do something more—and it should be for other human beings.” -Simon Sinek

Bob Vanourek and Gregg Vanourek are leadership practitioners, teachers, trainers, and award-winning authors. They are co-authors of *Triple Crown Leadership: Building Excellent, Ethical, and Enduring Organizations* (a winner of the International Book Awards, and called “the best book on leadership since *Good to Great*”), based on extensive research and practice, and their interviews with leaders in 61 organizations in 11 countries. Check out their manifesto on Leadership Derailers (and how to avoid them) and sign up for their newsletter.