

# Servant Leadership



# Servant Leadership:

*Attitudes, Skills and Behaviours*

By

Larry W. Boone

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This book is dedicated  
to Betty and Natalie  
for a lifetime of love and support.  
There could be no greater gift.



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# FOREWORD

Like many workers my early career consisted of several different jobs with several different organizations. Before, during and after college I was a concession stand attendant, road repair worker, telephone company driver, steel mill pipefitter's helper, production engineer, quality assurance engineer and quality assurance manager. Some of my personal work experiences were highly satisfying and enjoyable; others were decidedly not. I became very curious about what made the difference between the places I wanted to work and the places I didn't. The environment of work became such a personal interest that after my first graduate degree in Engineering Management I decided to pursue doctoral studies in business management and organization behaviour.

Upon attaining my Ph.D. and beginning my teaching career I came to know many college students searching for their first job, and I have had the pleasure of staying in touch with many of them through their early careers. I noticed that they had very similar experiences to my own. Some were very happy, comfortable and motivated with their work situations while others realized they had made a poor job choice and soon resumed their employment search. In general, I believe it is fair to say, many simply accepted the highest paying position offered to them or the one with the employer of highest reputation or perhaps the one closest to their "dream" location, assuming all job environments were pretty much the same once they entered their employer's door. Large numbers of these former students came to know that compensation, employer reputation and geographic landing spots were not the most important contributors to their satisfaction with work. This is no surprise to many experienced workers, of course. But it was enlightening to see how many early career workers thought money, prestige or location were the answers in their search for satisfaction and motivation at work.

Through my own teaching and research I focused on what I thought was the true differentiator between good places to work and poor ones—the quality of leadership.

At the Peter J. Tobin College of Business at St. John's University in New York I enjoyed wonderful opportunities to teach both graduate and undergraduate students in courses on leading, planning and venturing as well as other management topics. I also had the great fortune to associate with the university's Vincentian Center for Church and Society. Through

the Center many opportunities emerged to conduct workshops with religious and lay leaders in a variety of Church organizations. Numerous occasions to work with leaders in for-profit enterprises also developed through the Tobin College of Business.

Throughout my decades of teaching I came to know and appreciate some highly meaningful and useful books on leadership and management. Some of the earliest that captured my attention were by Peter Drucker and Stephen Covey. They helped me understand what leadership, management and working with and through people was really about.

Then I discovered the work of James Kouzes and Barry Posner through books such as *The Leadership Challenge*. Their work became a mainstay of my leadership teaching. The practitioners and students with whom I have worked truly enjoyed discussing their Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership and putting their ideas to use.

One day a small book titled *Christian Reflections on The Leadership Challenge* came to my attention. Through it I became more familiar with the writings of John Maxwell because he was the sponsor of the Catalyst Leadership Conference from which this little book emanated. Maxwell's work also impressed me greatly and became part of any leadership course outline I created. Through this *Christian Reflections* book I also became more familiar with Ken Blanchard and Patrick Lencioni, although their prestigious works had been well known to me previously. But two other *Christian Reflections* contributors, David McAllister-Wilson and Nancy Ortberg so enthused me that I began a concerted effort to learn more about visioning, enabling others to act and servant leadership. At that point I dug into materials by Robert Greenleaf, James Hunter and James Autry and by James Sipe and Don Frick.

Each book on servant leadership left me more inspired than the last and helped me come to personally important conclusions about what really makes the difference between the places I wanted to work and those where I just felt I had to work. Leadership is indeed the difference, and especially leadership by one who serves others first. I hadn't realized it at the time, but I was fortunate enough to come into contact with real servant leaders during my early business career. They made work environments stimulating. They made me want to get out of bed and go to work because I knew I could do my best and that my contributions were appreciated. They facilitated, educated and coached me. They were the difference.

Ideas about leading and working taken from the writers I have named led to the best classroom and workshop experiences I have had, and, referencing the feedback I have received from large numbers of

practitioners and students, they also affected many others in very significant, positive ways.

Based on the reactions I have received from my numerous workshop colleagues and students, I believe I recognize the servant leadership concepts and practices they have found to be most useful, inspiring and implementable. Also, with the assistance of those I have engaged in conference rooms, training rooms and classrooms, I have organized these concepts and practices into the categories of servant leader attitudes, skills and behaviours that readers will encounter in this book.

So I heartily express my gratitude to all the talented researchers and writers whose intellectual contributions form the basis of my servant leadership teaching and to the leaders and students who have helped derive the contents and organization of this book!

Also, thanks to Sr. Margaret John Kelly, DC, founder and former Executive Director of the Vincentian Center for Church and Society at St. John's University. She recruited me for the service work in which I have participated for over twenty-five years. Her leadership, professionalism and charism inspired me and modelled the way for me. My great appreciation is also extended to Mary Ann Dantuono, former Associate Director of the Center, with whom I have worked collegially across the New York metropolitan area and the U.S. as well as in Africa. We continue to do our best to help administrators lead a bit better. I also thank heartily Rev. Patrick Griffin, CM, current Executive Director of the Center, who has continued the institution's great work and introduced new initiatives that enthuse me and others to do the work that helps leaders serve others well. In no small measure I owe thanks as well to Rosemarie McTigue and Kimberly Hoppe-Hernandez, whose administrative support has been so helpful to me over many years.

Certainly, I owe my thanks to the many graduate assistants with whom I worked at St. John's over the years. Two of these former assistants, now well-established and outstanding professionals in their own fields of accounting and marketing, served as valuable co-authors on servant leadership articles. Monica Peborde was co-author of "Developing Leadership Skills in College and Early Career Positions" and Sanya Makhani served as co-author of "Five Necessary Attitudes of a Servant Leader." Not only was it a pleasure exploring servant leadership concepts with these intellectually challenging graduate students (at the time of co-authorship) but also the successful and enjoyable completion of these pieces made it easy for me to commit to writing this book.

During my teaching career I have been supported by numerous guest professionals who enter my classroom with outstanding enthusiasm to

share their knowledge, experiences and advice with students. I want to express my sincere appreciation to all of them. They have enriched my students' learning experiences immeasurably.

Among the many guest professionals who have educated my students, a few, in particular, stand out. I thank John and Florence Tutunjian as well as Angie Parlionas for generously sharing their talents, time, passion and humour with generations of St. John's business students pursuing their personal interests in becoming better entrepreneurs, leaders and managers. They went beyond imparting their considerable expertise for starting and leading successful business ventures by stressing the importance of doing the right things while running a business, all the while exciting students and bringing a large measure of fun into the classroom. There are no greater ambassadors for business and business education—so a special thanks to John, Florence and Angie!

I conclude this foreword by offering a simple and profound idea about servant leadership that is taken from previous authors on the topic and will be found in several sections of this book. My hope is that it will encourage those with a servant's heart (and I am sure there are many of you) to read through this material and conclude that it is okay to think this way.

In my many years as a management professor I read a lot of text books on management, leadership and associated topics. In none of them did I run across the word "love." When I started to read about servant leadership, I did.

Leaders should love their followers. That is, leaders should be patient with others and treat them with kindness and respect. In their dealings with others, leaders should be honest, humble, selfless and forgiving (another word not often found in management text books). Leaders should listen to others and be committed to high principles based on their own personal values as well as their organization's values. Finally, leaders should love others by expecting them to achieve great things and hold them accountable for doing so while seeing their own leadership role as facilitating their followers' success. Is this not the way people express love for each other outside the workplace? When leaders love their followers, work environments become places where people want to do their best knowing their work is important and their contributions will be appreciated.

# CHAPTER ONE

## SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Servant leaders do many special things for their organizations. One of their major contributions is setting the stage for other people to succeed. Because high numbers of followers achieve success, servant led organizations accomplish great things.

This book is about the attitudes servant leaders adopt, about the skills they develop and apply, and especially, about the behaviours they practice over time to create the environment for others to succeed. It's about the way servant leaders establish and maintain a supportive, facilitative climate where people strive together to enact a compelling shared vision of a better future, where people simultaneously accomplish tasks and build relationships and where leaders empower others to meet high expectations while holding them accountable for their performance and behaviours.

Different terms and approaches are used by many authors to describe the environment servant leaders create. For example, Ken Blanchard describes a climate where people willingly contribute their hearts, minds, creativity and excellence toward mutually beneficial goals—an environment where workers commit to the mission and to becoming the best they are capable of becoming.

James Kouzes and Barry Posner write about enabling others to act through fostering collaboration and strengthening them. Collaboration is fostered by building trust and facilitating relationships while followers are strengthened by enhancing self-determination and supporting development of their competence and confidence.

Nancy Ortberg writes that servant leaders release others to do their work by trusting them as they trust themselves to accomplish outstanding results.

James Hunter describes the servant-led environment as one in which leaders are driven by the institution's mission and where their followers simultaneously accomplish goals and build relationships. It is a climate where excellence is demanded, people are held accountable for performance and community is built.

John Maxwell says leaders empower people in the workplace. His Law of Empowerment states that leaders themselves have a strong sense of self-worth, and they believe not only in themselves but also in their mission and their people. To Maxwell empowering followers means leaders help others reach their potential by being on their side, encouraging them, giving them power and helping them to succeed.

James Autry says servant leadership is concerned with creating a place in which people can do good work while finding meaning in their efforts. It's a place where followers are free to bring their spirits to work.

Of great interest here is how servant leaders affect others through who they are and what they do. That is, how followers' satisfaction, commitment, productivity and creativity are improved through the environment servant leaders create. This is where servant leadership shines. This environment is applicable to the workplace, the community, the congregation, the family, the sports team or whatever particular unit may be guided by the servant leader.

Creating such a climate is attractive to many leaders. It's not hard to imagine that it should be. It is an environment where people "want to" work instead of feeling like they "have to" work. It's an environment that supports participants' dedication to mission, personal fulfilment, pride in accomplishment, sense of responsibility for achieving results, desire to be both effective and efficient and willingness to create new methods and relationships.

However, acting as servant leader for one's enterprise, agency, community, family or team is not a simple matter. It's a way of behaving one adopts over the long term. It's individual as well as organizational. Servant leadership is based on values, both personal and institutional, as well as relationships. The servant leadership style can be learned and applied by people who possess the intent to change, grow and improve. That is, servant leadership involves the type of person you are as well as the style you apply to lead others.

Generally speaking, leadership is a process through which a leader influences the behaviours of others toward a common goal. A vast amount of research informs us that an enterprise's performance is related directly to its leadership quality. Leadership accounts for the difference between long-term success and failure no matter how performance is assessed—in terms of growth, quality of service, financial results, innovativeness or any other means.

Because leadership is so important to people and institutions, the topic has been the subject of much interest and research for many decades. The contingency approach dominates the extensive literature on the subject.

The appropriate style of leading others depends upon the situation. Some contexts call for autocratic leadership, some for democratic or participative leadership. Best results are attained in other situations by using transformational or transactional approaches, and still others call for bureaucratic, charismatic or laissez-faire leadership styles—and so on.

**Organizations seeking servant leaders (small sample)**

7-Eleven	Nordstrom
Balfour Beatty Construction	Opportunity International
Broetje Orchards	Organisations That Matter
Catholic Relief Services	Rally Software Development
Cengage Learning	SAS
Container Store (The)	ServiceMaster
Darden Restaurants	Southwest Airlines
Evergreen Freedom Foundation	Starbucks
Federal Express	SunDurance Energy
Heartland Health	Synovus Financial
Herman Miller	TD Industries
Hess Corporation	Toro Company
Insperty Business Solutions	U.S. Cellular
Landry's Bicycles	U.S. Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Navy
Liberty Dialysis	Vanderbilt University
Luna Data Solutions	Wal-Mart Stores
Marriott International	Wegmans
Matrix Information Consulting	Whole Foods
McKinney Capital & Advisory	Yum Brands
Medtronic	Zappos.com
Men's Warehouse	

Primary source: Lichtenwalner, Ben. "Servant Leadership Companies List," last modified April 29, 2017. <https://www.modernservantleader.com/featured/servant-leadership-companies-list/>. Other sources supplemented the list.

Servant leadership's timeless relational and values-based principles help to address many of the myriad challenges facing those in leadership positions today. Organizations around the globe are revamping their

approaches toward people, relationships and leadership. And servant leadership is emerging as a preferred practice as demonstrated by its adoption at numerous successful and admired business enterprises across all industries and cultures as well as at many government agencies and multitudes of not-for-profit organizations and religious institutions. (See the figure on organizations seeking servant leaders for a small sample.) Many enterprises are including the practice of servant leadership principles as necessary or desired on the job descriptions they are posting when recruiting for various leader, manager and administrator positions.

## **Servant leadership and characteristics of servant leaders**

Let's now explore the background of servant leadership as well as what it takes to be a servant leader.

The servant leadership approach is not new; it has been used for thousands of years. However, the term *servant leadership* was introduced into the modern leadership literature in 1970 when Robert Greenleaf published his seminal essay "The Servant as Leader." Greenleaf spent a long and highly successful career at AT&T working in the fields of management, research, development and education. His essay was based on his personal experiences and offered a unique insight into the nature of leadership and a holistic slant to the behaviours distinguishing excellent leadership.

He believed the effective leader leads with a compelling vision shared with all who contribute to an organization's efforts, sets clear behavioural expectations and serves as an authentic practitioner of the values proclaimed.

Among its many features Greenleaf's approach to leading included a dedication to the value of service, a call to personal transformation and an emphasis on community. He recognized the need to produce high-quality work, achieve challenging goals and hold people accountable for their results and behaviours. But his relational and communal emphasis distinguished his ideas from prevailing leadership practice by emphasizing more about the power of love and less about the love of power, more about listening and connecting to others and less about watching and correcting and more about finding out what people want, less about telling people what to do.

There is broad agreement that Greenleaf's "servant as leader" approach draws upon and fosters the best within individuals and organizations. Primarily, servant leadership focuses on the growth and well-being of people and the communities in which they operate. At its core is respect



for the human person and for the dignity of work. Servant leaders place the needs of others first, share power, involve others in decision-making and help people reach their full potential.

Larry Spears, President and CEO of the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership from 1990-2007 as well as author and editor of hundreds of articles, books and other publications on servant-leadership, has identified ten characteristics of critical importance to servant leaders. This set of attributes provides a valuable overview of the effective, caring leadership provided by those who see themselves as serving others.

### **Characteristics of Servant Leaders**

#### **Listening**

Servant leaders strive to identify the will of a group and also help clarify that will. Servants listen receptively to what is said and unsaid. They also listen to their own inner voices. Listening, combined with self-reflection, is necessary for the growth and well-being of servant leaders.

#### **Empathy**

Servant leaders are skilled empathetic listeners. They accept and recognize people for their special, unique spirits. Co-workers' and colleagues' good intentions are assumed. They are not rejected as people even when leaders must refuse to accept their certain behaviours or performance.

#### **Healing**

Many people possess broken spirits and emotional hurts. This is part of being human. Servant leaders recognize the potential for healing self and relationships to others. They seek opportunities to make whole those with whom they interact.

#### **Awareness**

While servant leaders have their own inner serenity, their keen awareness of general conditions awakes and disturbs them to action. It helps them to understand ethical, power and values issues. Awareness helps servants observe situations from an integrated and holistic perspective.

#### **Persuasion**

Servant leaders do not coerce others into compliance by relying on the traditional authoritarian model of leading within organizations. Rather, they rely upon persuading, convincing others. They are effective consensus builders within their groups.

(Continued on next page)

### **Characteristics of Servant Leaders (continued)**

#### **Conceptualization**

Servants lead by visioning. They dream great dreams. They balance their necessary focus on day-to-day issues and problems with a conceptualizing perspective on what can be. Opportunities matter. Servant leaders call others forward to a grand future none could be capable of achieving alone.

#### **Foresight**

Rooted within the intuitive mind, foresight enables servant leaders to integrate past lessons, current realities and the likely future consequences of their decisions. Foresight is the hard-to-define ability to anticipate potential outcomes of a situation. It is closely related to the conceptualization characteristic.

#### **Stewardship**

Since above all servant leaders recognize and attend to the needs of others, they view their role as holding their organizations in trust for the greater good of society. Leaders do so by emphasizing openness and persuasion, not control.

#### **Commitment to the Growth of People**

A belief that people have intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers drives servant leaders' strong commitment to every constituent's personal and professional growth. Servants nurture others' development through funding for training, taking personal interest in their ideas, encouraging participative decision-making and many other practices.

#### **Building Community**

Servant leaders strive to build community within their institutions. Emphasizing common pillars, like mission, vision and values, helps create shared identity and unity of direction and expected behaviour.

Spears, Larry C. 2010. "Character and Servant Leadership: Ten Characteristics of Effective, Caring Leaders." *The Journal of Virtues & Leadership*, Volume 1, 25-30.

Fundamentally, Greenleaf discussed leading others not from the pedestal-style sources of authoritative power, control or dominance but as an attitude and perspective about self, about others and about a meaningful, fulfilling life. His message's simplicity has reverberated in people of different generations and across many cultures. Greenleaf

believed that by first learning to be a good follower, a servant leader acquires “habits”—ways of *being with* others and *for* others—or what ethicists would term “virtues.”

The other-centred personal habits of a servant leader emanate from strong self-awareness and social consciousness, and they translate into positive organizational behaviours and leadership approaches. They meld into a distinctive posture that allows a person to be both leader-servant and servant-leader simultaneously. From this dual position questions of “For whom do I work?” or “Whom do I serve?” and “Why do I work?” or “For what purpose do I serve?” are active continuously to keep leaders on track, that is, focused on a better future for the organization and all its constituents.

#### **Servant leaders**

- lead with a compelling vision shared with all who contribute to an organization’s efforts
- set clear behavioural expectations
- serve as authentic practitioners of the values proclaimed

#### **Servant leadership includes**

- a dedication to the value of service
- a call to personal transformation
- an emphasis on community

With personal humility servant leaders place themselves at the service of others. The servant leadership approach focuses on the needs and interests of others. Leaders serve followers, not the other way around. The personal needs of the servant leader are subservient to the desire to help followers grow both personally and professionally. According to Greenleaf, servant leadership begins by demonstrating integrity, creating relationships based on trust and assisting others in learning, growing and developing into leaders themselves. Because leaders are committed to developing their followers, they encourage the freedom to experiment and take risks as well as to make mistakes without fearing punishment.

Some of Greenleaf’s intriguing people-growing and community-building tenets of servant leadership may be expressed as:

- leaders and leadership can emerge from any place in any enterprise, agency, congregation or community; leaders are not necessarily those with formal position and authority
- the best leaders are dedicated followers (servants) first, then emerge as leaders, and
- most group members realize intuitively who their real leaders are.

What led Greenleaf to develop this concept that has been embraced by practitioners, academics and consultants over the years and has been adopted by hundreds of organizations as their leadership philosophy? Two stories help to relate his motivation.

First, in Greenleaf's (2002, 21) own words we come to understand the genesis of his realization:

The idea of the servant leader came out of reading Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East*. In this story we see a band of men on a mythical journey, probably also Hesse's own journey. The central figure of the story is Leo, who accompanies the party as the *servant* who does their menial chores, but who also sustains them with his spirit and his song. He is a person of extraordinary presence. All goes well until Leo disappears. Then the group falls into disarray and the journey is abandoned. They cannot make it without the servant Leo. The narrator, one of the party, after some years of wandering, finds Leo and is taken into the Order that had sponsored the journey. There he discovers that Leo, whom he had known first as *servant*, was in fact the titular head of the Order, its guiding spirit, a great and noble *leader*. ... to me, this story clearly says that *the great leader is seen as servant first*, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness. Leo was actually the leader all of the time, but he was servant first because that was what he was, *deep down inside*.

Second, while a student in a college course titled "Sociology of the Labor Problem," Greenleaf accepted a challenge issued by his professor to develop a way to make the world a better place. His particular professor wasn't charismatic or dynamic, personal traits often mistakenly associated with leadership. Instead, Greenleaf's teacher was advanced in years and a quiet man who asserted that social change occurs only when people within organizations, not outside them, choose to make their institutions themselves forces for public good. Greenleaf accepted the professor's challenge. He became such a force during his AT&T career.

The wise teacher's advice is still applicable today. A few brief passages from Greenleaf's writings illustrate his insights into human nature and the prudence of servant leadership.

On who the servant leader is:

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. That person is sharply different from the person who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions ... The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature.

The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other peoples' highest priority needs 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 servants? *And* what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, will they not be further deprived? (2008, 15)

On considering what one is trying to do:

A mark of leaders, an attribute that puts them in a position to show the way to others, is that they are better than most at pointing the direction. As long as one is leading, one always has a goal. It may be a goal arrived at by group consensus, or the leader, acting on inspiration, may simply have said, "Let's go this way." But the leader always knows what it is and can articulate it for any who are unsure. By clearly stating and restating the goal the leader gives certainty to others who may have difficulty in achieving it themselves (2002, 29).

On seeking, listening to others, hope and optimism:

But if one is *servant*, either leader or follower, one is always searching, listening, expecting that a better wheel for these times is in the making. It may emerge any day. Any one of us may find it out of their own experience (2008, 11).

On power and authority:

A fresh critical look is being taken at the issues of power and authority, and people are beginning to learn, however haltingly, to relate to one another in less coercive and more creatively supporting ways. A new moral principle is emerging which holds that the only authority deserving one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader (2008, 11-12).

Transforming from conventional leader to servant leader is not a simple task. It requires conscious effort to change one's ways of thinking, acting and reacting. It means ensuring one has the requisite attitudes, skills and behaviours of a servant leader.

James Autry, author of *The Servant Leader: How to Build a Creative Team, Develop Great Morale, and Improve Bottom-Line Performance*, writes that it is easier to develop an attitude of service if leaders develop ways of being authentic, vulnerable, accepting, present and useful to others.

Authenticity means being who you really are in all circumstances, practicing the same values in whatever role you fulfil. Being vulnerable requires courage because it entails giving up some traditional notions of a leader always being in control. Vulnerability means being open and honest about your feelings in the work environment. It means expressing candidly your doubts, fears or concerns about personal ideas or a constituent's performance. Also, vulnerability includes admitting your mistakes to others and being able to say, "I was wrong" and "I am sorry." Acceptance requires embracing disagreement as part of the work process. Humans will disagree. Acceptance doesn't imply that you agree with others' ideas merely because they have been expressed. Rather, it means that you accept ideas as valid for discussion, review and critique and that you focus on the ideas themselves and not on the individual who offers them. Being present means applying your values at all times to tasks and decisions at hand and being fully available to others as you react to their issues or problems. Finally, by being useful Autry means providing service to others, seeing yourself as a resource to them and for them.

Those who lead as servants put the needs of their organization and people before their own; conceptualize what "can be" and lead with an inspiring vision for the future; listen to, understand and empathize with others; and accept others with tolerance for their imperfections but may refuse to accept some of a person's effort or performance as sufficient, that is, they hold people accountable for their performance and behaviour. Also, servant leaders persuade rather than coerce; appreciate the value of learning; adapt to change readily; work hard to gain trust; help others reach their potential; encourage others to try new things and new ways; support people in healing when necessary; and withdraw regularly to renew themselves through reflection.

Servant leaders do not lead from the top. They do not always visualize themselves at the peak of an organizational pyramid. Instead, servants see themselves in various flexible positions within any hierarchy. As servant leaders they do not force people to follow through authoritarian means but

walk among followers, helping them move in a direction that unites all in a common vision by facilitating, educating and coaching them.

**Servant leadership  
Newly-appointed leader's introduction**

Marie was recently appointed to her first leadership position in a very large technology company. She is to serve as director of western region operations even though she worked in the eastern region since starting with the firm just four years ago. Only a few people in the west have met her, and it's fair to say none feel they really know her well.

Upon being introduced for the first time to a large gathering of western region employees, she took microphone in hand and began, *"I learned early in life from my mother and father, my Granny Mildred and my fifth grade teacher, Charlotte Weems, that the most important things I should remember are: #1 always do my best no matter what I do, #2 be concerned personally about the welfare of others and #3 be smart enough to listen to people who are smarter than me. That advice has served me very well through two college degrees, an exciting early career entrepreneurial venture that failed but taught me a lot about business and going for what I believe in, four different jobs with three different firms, two inspiring terms as a board member of a children's hospital, one wonderful 20-year marriage and raising two great children right up to today in their early teenage years. I have tried my best and am still trying to instill those same values in our kids.*

*During my time with our firm I have appreciated the way my leaders have given me opportunities to do my best in several projects I was able to initiate, and I have met many colleagues who have taught me a great deal. Also, I'm proud to be part of an organization whose concern for the welfare of others within the company and people in the community is just as strong as my own."*

Servant leaders reveal their personal values to followers and, whenever possible, link them to organizational values. When followers know what's important to their leaders, trust builds.

Several researchers have developed scales for measuring servant leadership. Some of the behavioural dimensions identified are: accountability, altruistic calling, authenticity, behaving ethically, conceptual skills,

courage, creating value for the community, emotional healing, empowering, forgiveness, helping subordinates grow and succeed, humility, interpersonal acceptance, organizational stewardship, persuasive mapping, putting subordinates first, relationships, standing back and wisdom.

From these results it can be seen that servant leaders give first priority to the interests of others while delivering necessary support and affording credit to others for accomplished tasks. They demonstrate genuine concern for others' career growth and professional development by providing encouragement and aid, even mentoring. Servant leaders use their deep organizational knowledge to facilitate others, especially immediate followers, in identifying and solving problems as well as determining when and how to complete tasks. They interact openly, fairly and honestly with others, make genuine efforts to know, understand and support others in the institution and emphasize building long-term relationships with close followers. Importantly, servants foster a proactive, self-confident attitude among followers and engender in them a sense of personal power. They hold others accountable for performance they can control while keeping their own accomplishments in perspective and, when appropriate, admit their own fallibility and mistakes. They take reasonable risks and embrace new approaches to problems and situations. Servant leaders take responsibility for the organization's well-being, acting as caretakers for their institution and role models for others. They have a conscious and sincere concern for helping the community as well as demonstrate sensitivity to others' personal concerns.

The servant leader employs a powerful shared vision to inspire others to work enthusiastically and to be committed to a brighter future which benefits the collective interests of the group, the organization and/or society. Among widely diverse constituents servant leaders build community by emphasizing unity as defined by common mission, values and vision.

## **Leadership and power**

Greenleaf points out that leaders' influence over others necessarily involves power. Power is the ability to act. It moves people and organizations. Power is to leadership what energy is to physics; it makes things happen.



### **Servant leadership Visioning**

Paul, a newly appointed Chief Executive Officer was making his first remarks to his constituents when he asked for questions from the assembled group. One of the questions was, “What do you see ahead for us?”

Paul had been discussing and considering his vision for the enterprise for quite some time so without hesitation he started to speak about what he envisioned in the future and how he expected to inspire his followers.

*“I see an organization that will support families and individuals in achieving health and happiness through the products and services we create and deliver to them. They will come to us with excitement because they are confident that we will provide what they need to support their dreams and solve their most meaningful problems. They will see us as partners in building fulfilling lives.*

*I see a work family that consists of colleagues who respect and trust each other and value each member for who they are and what they are capable of doing. We will view each other as teammates who share the responsibilities and rewards associated with achieving grand things and celebrate together as we attain success.*

*I see an organization that contributes radically to the improvement of society and the communities in which we work and live. We will make a difference. We will have a positive impact on our world.”*

Servant leaders envision the future in a manner that expresses high ideals and values, incorporates followers’ as well as the leader’s hopes and aspirations and serves as a call to action for working together to create a better tomorrow. Visions are meant to inspire. Vision isn’t everything, but it’s the beginning of everything.

What organization do you think Paul heads?

However, Greenleaf describes very different types of power. Servant leaders may influence others through persuasion and example. In these approaches “power is used to create opportunity and alternatives so that individuals may choose and build autonomy” (Greenleaf 2002, 55). Followers’ behaviours may be influenced by leaders’ articulation of superior organizational knowledge derived from their “closer to the ground” position within the enterprise; leaders hear, see and know things others may not.

Another potential power source for leaders is coercion. Greenleaf writes that coercive power is used “to dominate and manipulate people ... into a predetermined path” (Greenleaf 2002, 55). Coercive power derives from leaders’ positions of formal authority and their ability to sanction the actions of others by providing or withholding effort, support or money. The author warns of negative consequences when coercive power is exercised; it strengthens resistance among followers. Accordingly, servant leaders avoid the exercise of coercive power.

Referent power is another source of influencing behaviour, and it is afforded to people to whom others naturally refer when leadership is necessary. This type of influence does not depend on the authority that accompanies a formal position of organizational leadership. Rather, referent power emerges from a voluntary relationship between leader and followers. Others sense that their referent leader possesses personal characteristics and appeal, inspiration, wisdom or expertise. Seeking guidance and direction, followers are drawn to them even though they are not formal leaders within their enterprise. Servant leaders tend to be high in referent power.

It is interesting, perhaps fascinating, to view power as possessing something of a mystical quality. Under certain conditions power is not depleted when it is used. Rather, power multiplies. When leaders’ power is applied for the purpose of meeting the needs of the institution or advancing the capacity of followers to accomplish work, power is not an exhaustible resource or even a zero-sum game among powerholders. The more power is shared, given away by leaders, the more it accrues back to them. Sharing power increases followers’ willingness to work toward organizational goals as well as the resources (connections to authority) they need to make things happen. Thus the effectiveness of workers increases. When followers accomplish more, organizations thrive and leaders are recognized as effective. Effective leaders garner more responsibility and power.

What does this power multiplication look like in day-to-day operational terms? Leaders share power with everyone, including those closest to

where organizational action takes place—for example, where well-trained, self-confident and clearly-directed nurses care for patients, faculty teach students, attendants serve passengers, mechanics repair equipment, designers create products, salespersons sell to customers and so forth. At all points where followers contact clients they may be far removed in place and time from their hierarchical leader, but they are able to make decisions and take actions that bring to fruition the organization’s vision without checking all the way back through the chain of command. In other words, followers are empowered.

As we shall examine in closer detail throughout this book, servant leaders’ attitudes and skills are applied to develop many specific behaviours that contribute directly to workplace environments where followers feel empowered to act. This is the real “magic” of servant leadership.

Should leaders be perceived as using power to satisfy their own personal needs, followers judge them to be self-serving leaders, not servant leaders. In that case, followers tend to limit leaders’ power to the formal authority they have to tell people what to do on the job. Workers will do what is necessary to keep their jobs, and that’s about all. Self-serving leaders see their power to affect workers’ behaviours dwindle over time.

But power used effectively, as it is by servant leaders, can be viewed as demonstrating a mystical quality. When it is used to meet the legitimate needs of the organization and its workers, power multiplies.

## **Leadership and service**

While servant leadership involves the exercise of power, as do all forms of leadership, it also is about service, caring about others’ needs and interests and about the organization’s well-being. Like power, service can be viewed as having a mystical quality.

Leaders serve others by advancing their capacities for achieving success. Because servant leaders facilitate, educate and coach their followers, people grow in self-awareness, abilities, organizational knowledge, connections and self-confidence. They feel capable because they are aware of vision and values—what the institution wants to accomplish and how they are expected to behave. They are motivated because they believe their work is important. They feel valued and supported. Leaders serve others by creating this environment for success. Also, servant leaders model their leadership style for others. They educate and inspire through example. And service multiplies when followers being served are inspired to serve others. As Greenleaf suggests, one of the

results of servant leadership is that followers are more likely to become servant leaders themselves.

### **Servant leadership Emergency room doctor**

Here is a great story from Nancy Ortberg. It demonstrates many aspects of a servant leader's approach.

... I worked as a registered nurse in the emergency room of a busy hospital. One ER doc was such an incredible leader that when he was on your shift, you knew things were going to go smoothly. You thought, 'Today I'm going to be part of a team, I'm going to learn something, and I'm going to be a better nurse for it.'

Other doctors would tell us what to do, and we just did it. But this guy orchestrated the emergency room. He asked questions while he was calling for procedures. He wanted to know, 'Why are we doing this?' He would say to his staff, 'What do you think?' as he worked with a patient. He never lost control of the situation, but he conducted the team like a fine-tuned orchestra, because he involved everybody. Obviously, he stayed the leader; he made the calls. But it was not uncommon for him to ask someone for an opinion, obtain a vital piece of information, and then change his mind. By working under such a leader, I felt like I was part of saving lives, not just working a shift. He gave us critical tasks to do, and we rose to the challenge. He called us by our names and asked for feedback. And at the end of the shift, he always thanked everybody. Who wouldn't want to follow a leader like that? (Ortberg 2004, 90-91)

Servant leaders are educators. They ask questions, involve and challenge others and let people influence their decisions when appropriate. They solicit feedback because they want to improve. They address followers by their names and acknowledge their contributions to success.

### **Virtues, values and traits**

Effective leaders and their followers practice virtues and act on their shared values. Practicing virtuous behaviour, which entails acting with

courage, wisdom, justice, patience, humility or other virtues, builds *character* in leaders and others. Practicing values, such as the espoused core values of an organization, builds *community* among leaders and their followers.

No one is born with character. Rather, it is developed through an inward journey supported by virtuous living, honest reflection and self-discipline. That is why it is often said that great leadership starts with *self-awareness*, realizing what is important to us, and *self-knowledge*, such as recognition of our personal motivators, strengths and weaknesses.

Applying ideas emanating from the inspiring and highly practical leadership research of James Kouzes and Barry Posner as published in their book, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations*, once we know ourselves well, we can find our own voice and start to develop effective relationships between ourselves and others. After all, in the end, leadership is not about me or about you; it's about *you and me*.

One key aspect of self-awareness related to servant leadership is a personal understanding of whether we attain satisfaction and fulfilment by serving others or by acting in more self-serving ways. The servant leader, of course, is called to serve others first. Those with different sources of satisfaction and fulfilment will most likely be more comfortable with other leadership styles.

Leadership finds its personal origins in faith. Faith in ourselves is *confidence*, a widely recognized trait associated with leadership. Faith in each other is *trust*, a critical success factor for any interdependent group, team or organization. Faith in an institution is *loyalty* and *commitment*, highly prized organizational attributes that contribute to operational stability and long-term success. Of course, it should be recognised that for many people faith begins with their relationship with God. And the stronger their faith in God, the easier they find it to have faith in themselves and each other.

Leaders become trusted by others, that is, they become *trustworthy*, by acting with *integrity*. Integrity is the integration of leaders' values and behaviours. In other words, leaders demonstrate their integrity when they practice what they preach, walk their talk and honour their promises. When followers observe integrity, they find it possible to believe in their leaders. As a result, leaders possess what Kouzes and Posner call *credibility*, the most critical trait for exemplary leadership. One will do well to attend to Kouzes and Posner's First Law of Leadership: if people don't believe in the messenger, they won't believe the message.

### **Servant leadership Commitment to growth**

Albert is a baby boomer, and he's starting to consider the retirement his family claims is "long overdue." As Vice President for Sales for a large corporation, he signed off two months ago on a new training program that is expected to improve the way his firm's services are marketed to millennials. All salespeople are required to take the two-day training that will be offered over the next six weeks. The first scheduled session is today.

At 9:00 Albert takes a seat in the third row of Training Room B at corporate headquarters and looks across the aisle. He extends his hand to a young woman who started to work about seven months ago. He says, "Good morning, my name is Al. I'm looking forward to learning something new. What's your name?"

Servant leaders have a strong commitment to every constituent's personal and professional growth. Servants bolster organizational trust by acknowledging their own need for continuous self-improvement. They know that if it is necessary for followers, it's necessary for them.

## **Leadership styles**

For many decades two major approaches to studying leadership have involved traits and behaviours. Trait studies consider particular elements of character or personality as well as social, physical or intellectual attributes that differentiate leaders from non-leaders. Traits describe "what leaders are made of." If all we needed to know about leadership involved traits, we could select the potentially effective leaders from among any population.

Behaviour studies describe a leader's actions, practices or performance. In other words, behaviours describe "what leaders do." If all we needed to know about leadership involved behaviours, we could readily train just about anybody to be an effective leader.

Appreciating servant leadership requires an understanding of both traits and behaviours.