



DECONSTRUCTING LEADERSHIP



TRAINING
GROUNDS

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We all have an image that comes to mind when we think of leadership.

It may be the visible leader in the spotlight who leads with charisma. It may be someone who is quiet and consistent in their leadership that goes unseen. Whatever the personality or context of the leader there are some defining characteristics of leadership. Understanding these elements is critical to advancing your leadership and service to your community.

LONELY BUT NOT ALONE

Leadership is a collective process. It's not about rank, title, or position. It's about the connection between people – between leaders who lead together, between leaders and followers, between a team of people working together. It is fundamentally relational. It's also a process, a collaborative action that makes forward progress. So, leadership is much less about high-profile people in authority and much more about those who can get people to work together to get something done.

LEADERSHIP VISION

Leadership sees potential for transformation. A core skill of a leader is foresight – the ability to foresee possibility in the future, even if it is just a little bit farther along than others. It's not always with total clarity but it's related to perception, intuition, anticipation, a keen sense of knowing what's ahead or what's possible. A leader works in a dual mindset – one foot in the real world, the present, the 'right now' and the other foot stepping into the future, above the current restraints perceived around them.

THE WORK OF ORGANIZING

Leadership organizes and aligns connections. Leadership involves organizing. Leaders bring people and resources together in a way that makes sense toward the desired goal. A leader makes sure to include the right people on a team, removes barriers that distance and prevent necessary connections. This organization occurs through conversation and questions and positive inquiry into the way things are working. Leaders aren't afraid to prune what's hurting their cause

and include people and ideas that may not otherwise be heard and valued.

Where are you looking for potential and aligning connections today?

INSPIRATION

Leadership inspires people to achieve beyond their perceived limits. The current way of doing things always gets the current results. Leadership looks beyond what is being done to what is possible.

It's not a harsh directing or pushing around of others, but inspiring, stirring and rousing up by speaking to a deeper passion. Part of it is helping others see the connection between their personal values and goals to the aim of the organization or team. People are looking for meaning in their work and leadership calls this to the surface.

Perhaps you've heard of the parable from the time of rebuilding St. Paul's Cathedral after the 1666 fire in London. There were three brick layers working

with various level of effort and joy. Each was asked by someone passing by what they were doing.

The first said, "I'm laying bricks."

The second said, "I'm building a wall."

The third said, "I'm building a great cathedral."

The first had a job, the second had a craft, the third was engaged in a larger vision. They each had a different view of their work.

This meaning making is echoed in the story of US president John Kennedy who when visiting NASA asked a janitor who was mopping the lobby floor what his job was, and he replied "I'm helping send a man to the moon". This person embraced the connection between what they were doing in the moment and the larger vision to which they were contributing.

Both the cathedral builder and NASA worker saw themselves and their work as part of something bigger. It's the responsibility of leadership to

create a culture that inspires, encourages, and connects people to a greater purpose.

In what ways are you creating a culture and environment that inspires others to reach higher?

ETHICS AND POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION

Good leadership contributes to society in a positive way. Leadership is helpful, constructive, caring, and useful to improving the human condition in the world. We have too many 'leaders' who have been driven by their personal striving for fame and wealth that have hurt and hindered others in their reach for position and authority.

There is an applied ethos to leadership that requires ethical practice be carried out in their actions and in the teams and systems they lead. More than a code or set of rules, leadership is called to step into areas of uncertainty and ambiguity and find ways to move forward that are kind, inclusive, and loving toward people.

Ethical leadership models cultural respect and works for people without violence to their values and culture. Leaders who don't have service and improving the world for others at the center of their practice are likely to remain a leader in title only.

Real leadership seeks to defend human rights and bring good to the world. This should be part of natural leadership whether in family life, a team in a workplace, or in the acts of a world leader.

What are some of the wrongs in our world that are perpetuated by structures and systems? Where can your leadership influence those things for the better?



Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone. - George Dei

WITH GREAT POWER...

In a leadership proverb that can be traced back to Roosevelt, Churchill, the time of the French Revolution, and the gospel of Luke (12:48), Stan Lee reminds us through the story of Spider-Man of this essential power-responsibility element of leadership: “And a lean, silent figure slowly fades in the gathering darkness, aware at last that in this world, with great power there must also come – great responsibility!” (from the closing panel of Amazing Fantasy 15 in 1962).

And again, reflected in the closing frame of Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse (2018): “That person who helps others simply because it should or must be done, and because it is the right thing to do, is indeed without a doubt, a real superhero.”

What’s your spiritual leadership vision? How do you determine what actions best serve others?



“The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.

The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous...and, what is the effect on the least privileged in society?

- Robert Greenleaf



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