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Personal Leadership Philosophy

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Introduction

Leadership is a powerful word; it can represent the bad or good in a person. When I think of leadership, I think of the people in my life who have accomplished a great deal to help others. Which I believe is a good thing. I do not feel that I have accomplished the leadership status, in a sense of people following or looking up to me. I believe that leadership comes over time; you must make mistakes to make things better. As I think back to all the leaders in my life and in the world, I noticed that all of them have their own values and ways of accomplishing greatness in their life. It is essential to have my own personal beliefs and values before becoming a leader to others. I believe that for me to be a great leader I must have values of responsibility, humility, an open-mind of diversity/differences, family and love, a servant leader attitude, and communication. These seven values of mine are going to help me become a great leader and also help me accomplish my goal, which in the end is to help others in an effective and positive way. I truly believe as Dr. Paula Cunningham stated, “You do not make yourself a leader, others make you a leader” (January 31st, 2007). In this paper I will go over my personal values in details and then I will discuss as a student how I held leadership roles and ways I dealt with decision making and challenges.

Values

Responsibility

I am a person who takes great respect and responsibility in all that I do. I have a responsibility not only to myself but also to others. When I have a project big or small I know that it is not in the interest for just me, but also for others in the organization or team that I am with. So, needless to say I take all that I do very seriously. I sometimes

have been in projects and teams where I was responsible to delegate work, which I am comfortable at doing, but I have also been on teams that I was not the leader and work was delegated to me and I took it with respect and knew it was my responsibility to get the task done with the team. With respectful / responsible leadership comes “actions that show that the leader cares about followers” (Sashkin & Sashkin, p.42). An example of this could be telling and showing that you care for your followers by giving them encouraging words that they are doing well. I always let my team members know that they are an asset to the team or organization and if it were not for them, we probably would not be as successful as we are.

Humility

I know that I am not better than anyone on my team or organization. All of the people that I work with are on the same level. I am learning everyday from them as they are learning from me. I know that if I am put into a leadership position by my group, that it is an honor and that I should not act in a different way as if I was better. When I think of humility I think back to the chapter in Maxwell’s book on the law of the bench. I feel that I am still a bench player, even though I have a leadership role. I am still learning from other leaders who have had more experience than I do. “If you are a starter, you should be sure to honor the people on the bench and acknowledge the value they bring to the team” (Maxwell, p.176). I know that I did not do all the work on my own and that the other players are just as much as part of the team as I am.

Open-Minded in Diversity/Differences

This is a huge value of mine. I truly believe that no one can be an effective leader with out having an open mind on all issues, especially on diversity. Coming from a

diverse background, I know how hard it can be, to be accepted and appreciated in a team or organization. Along with having an open mind of diversity, comes building relationships with people who might have different views or philosophy than yours, but as Dr. Jacqueline Taylor states “you can’t build people unless you know them” (March 28th, 2007). Talking to people who you might not necessarily talk to might help you find out that you have a lot in common and a relationship for your team or workplace might form. As the saying goes “we shall never judge a book from its outside before reading it”. The same applies to people. We should always try to get to know the person before passing judgment.

Family and Love

Along with having professional values, I believe that you must have personal values when trying to become a leader. Even though I believe this value can be both. It is very important to have time for your family and to have time for yourself. It is crucial to have the passion and love for your work just as much as you love your family and friends. I care for all of the people in my organizations and team. I let them know that they are cared for and that they are important to the team. The atmosphere in my team should feel like a family. I never go a day without thinking about how my family and friends have helped me out with all I have done up to now in my professional and educational career. It is vital to have laughter and fun in my life, along with spirituality. As long as I have these values in my life, I know that I will be able to gain and strengthen my other values to the fullest.

Servant Leadership

I believe that I practice the Robert Greenleaf model of servant leadership. I am a leader to help others. I do not do things to benefit myself. I am very good at helping people find the resources that they might need to help them through the issues they are going through. I am here to encourage and help others when it is needed. As stated by Bowen and Shapiro “service is a social obligation” (1998, p.9). I believe this to be true, it is my obligation to help others, especially students in higher education. Since working in the admissions office at Michigan State University (MSU), I have found myself going over and beyond in helping all students applying to MSU. It is my obligation to help, not because I am getting paid, but because I want to, and it makes me feel good to know that I am making a difference in someone’s life. I am there to serve the students and help them with their needs.

Communication

After discussing all of my values, if I do not have great communication skills with others, it will be hard to be a successful leader. As Dr. Cunningham and East Lansing Mayor Sam Singh stated, one cannot “fake sincerity,” because people will know that you are not being true to them. Having open communication with your team or organization is one of the best keys to having a successful leadership career in my eyes. Communication leadership helps transformational leaders “listen and pay close attention to those with whom they are communicating.” (Sashkin & Sashkin, p.194). A leader who has communication skills will be able to help others understand the key issues that need to be focused on. It is also extremely important to let your followers know that they can come to you any time when they need assistance or even when they have ideas that they would

like to share. It is also just as important for the followers to know that the leader is willing and able to come up to you to discuss any issues or projects with the team.

Leadership Discussion

What circumstances are you willing to take risks?

As I read through the chapter on risk taking in Sashkin & Sashkin, I realized that I am not that willing to take risks when I do not have “a strong sense of control”. The two stories in the chapter about the heart operation and hostage scenarios, where completely different in the kind of risks I would be willing to take (2003, p 82-87). I had control of my fate when I was trying to escape the terrorists, to whereas I had to rely on the surgeon to help me if I was to take the risk of having the heart surgery. I believe that I will take risks when I know the good will out weight the bad. Taking risks is not something I will do if it only benefits some people; it has to be for the common good of all. Sometimes when I think of risks, I think of it as being a good thing, it means there could be change and even though some people are afraid of change, it can really help and make a difference in the workplace.

As an undergraduate student at Michigan State University, I was involved in several student organizations. I found myself taking risks with other members. My organization took a risk of putting on a seventy thousand dollar cultural event, even though the odds were against us. We worked as a team at fundraising and writing proposals. The administration and even some staff were very doubtful of us, in the end; we made more than enough money and were very successful. If it were not for the courage and passion that we had to take that risk, we would have never known that we could have achieved a wonderful and successful program.

How do I make decisions as a leader?

I am a person to look at all my options before making a decision. I am very cautious at making certain decisions, especially if it is something that will have a huge impact on my team or organization. I am not a person to let anyone force or persuade me in making a decision that would compromise my morals or values. I will however, listen to all viewpoints from my team. I like to know all the facts of the issue that I need to make a decision on. I believe that I have a keen sense of what is right and wrong. I can however make a decision right on the spot if I have to, I just rather not, especially if it is a big decision.

Working as a graduate assistant in the office of admissions I have had a lot more responsibility in my professional life and a lot more decisions to make. Anywhere from looking over applications and making the decision to accepting or denying a student, decisions on heading certain programs that I have never worked with, and one of the toughest decisions was to accept a job offer I received. With all the decisions that I have had to make, I had great mentors in the office to help me through these decisions. I discussed my options with them, listen to their ideas and expertise, and then made the decision that I felt was best for me.

When do you show your vision as a leader?

I believe that my vision comes out from the very moment that I start to work with an organization or team. It is very important to work in an organization that has the same or very similar values and vision as I do. That is the first thing that I look at when choosing to apply or work with an organization. A great example of me showing my vision as a leader is when I applied to the office of admissions for the graduate assistant

position. In my interview Jim Cotter the acting director asked me to tell him a little about myself. I told him about my background what work I have done in the past and then I went into discussion of what my vision would be for the office if I were to be hired. Mr. Cotter was very pleased and surprised that I had even thought to mention my vision; he then went into explaining the offices vision and goals, which were right along the same as mine. Overall, I feel that if I have all my values put in place, I will be able to achieve as a leader when my time comes for me to step up to be a true leader.

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