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ELI – Personal Leadership Philosophy
12-5-06

Throughout our lives we each have many experiences and opportunities that shape what we believe and how we act. In my life one of these experiences has been the Emerging Leader Institute; teaching me important concepts about leadership while giving me valuable practice as a leader. Over the course of the semester I have begun to form, on my own, a theory or philosophy about being an effective leader. To be an effective leader I believe that you must put on several important characteristics; you must be an effective communicator, knowledgeable about your subject matter, passionate in motivating others, strategically organized, and determined to achieve your goal. Also, it is imperative that leaders avoid the pitfalls of isolationism, being more passionate than logical, and underestimating the difficulties of creating change. I believe that by considering these elements when acting as leader, you can be more effective, respected, and ultimately successful.

As a leader you never work in a vacuum. Every problem and its solution comes about by your ability to effectively communicate. Famous presidential speechwriter James Humes once said, “The art of communication is the language of leadership.” As a leader strives to create a positive change in their environment they must be able to persuade, explain, and rationalize to others about their goals and plans for execution of those goals. For those who are striving to communicate to those they lead I offer two tips; Have a clear and concise vision. In my experience it is very apparent that when you struggle to find the words for what you are trying to say your credibility diminishes exponentially. Having purpose behind every word that you say will build respect among your followers and help you to achieve your goals more easily. Secondly, communication is a two-way street. When you communicate you share your opinions

with others and expect a response. Use these responses to improve projects and better achieve your goals.

Know your subject matter! This concept requires no introduction or elaborate explanation; you just have to know your material. Even the most popular person in the world, if they were to stand before a group and speak about a topic of which they had no knowledge, it would be obvious to every person in the room. When acting as a leader you must thoroughly know about every element of your project to appear credible. This task might seem challenging, and it is, but in actuality it is extremely helpful. Not only will you appear to (and actually) be more credible, you will have an increased level of confidence in yourself because you can trust that you are prepared to handle the situations that arise.

As human beings it is very easy for us to be caught up in our own emotions. We can become inspired over the smallest factors in our lives and our minds begin to race. Thoughts of problems, solutions, success and failures pour through our systems building excitement about the future. When acting as a leader, these emotions are often what keeps us motivated and on task. So to make our projects as successful as possible we must be able to instill these same feelings in those whom we lead. The process of doing so can be trying, but passionate leaders supported by passionate followers can create remarkable successes. When you serve as a leader remember to instill passion within those around you or you will find yourself always engaged in an uphill battle.

Have you ever been in the office of very successful person? Perhaps a long-time politician, the president of a university, or the CEO of a corporation. What did it look like? Was their desk orderly and well kept or were papers strewn about all over the room? Did you find well-labeled filing cabinets or scattered piles all over the floor? Obviously, leaders must be

organized. In order to look professional you must have some level of organization apparent in your appearance. More importantly however, to be successful you must be organized. When chaos ensues having a system of organization enable you to better respond to problems and come up with solutions based on the facts. Leading without organization can be your worst nightmare while leading with organization can be one of your greatest assets.

Even under the best circumstances, leaders have to face numerous challenges and setbacks on daily basis. To be an effective leader you must be determined to succeed. Oftentimes we struggle to keep pressing forward when adversity comes our way, but in order to create the desired changes in our environment we must press on! In Kouzes & Posner's book "The Leadership Challenge" they approach this issue by calling it "challenge[ing] the process." Through their experiences they share that in order to get anything worthwhile accomplished you must "make something happen," or tenaciously work toward your goals. If you work hard and refuse to give up on your projects, you can't help but accomplish your goals.

With your plan for success laid out before you remember the adage "no man is an island." Especially when operating as a leader, it is always important to utilize those around you to achieve your goals. While most leaders are exceptionally talented and intelligent they can often make a grave mistake in isolating themselves. No one is capable of saving the world on his or her own, so why try! Build on the team around you to create the most successful project possible. Recognizing your need for support from those around you is important and it takes practice to develop a team that is willing to work for you. When you are trying to motivate others to work for you try to instill some of your passion within them. As I discussed earlier passionate organizations can achieve many wonderful things through their dedication to achieving their

goals. Therefore, it is extremely important to build your support on mutual passion rather on the boss / employee situation.

We have talked a lot about passion and its usefulness as a tool for leaders, but remember that passion cannot do everything. New Testament writer Paul said in Romans 10:2 that “they have a real zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.” This verse is speaking in a religious context but the application in leadership is quite clear; passion can do nothing without knowledge. When we work as leaders we must remember that we must direct our passion in a logical way or it has been for naught. To do this I think it is helpful to remember to separate yourself somewhat from the project. By removing your personal ego and self-worth from the project you can make rational decisions based on logical facts rather than the passion you feel about the assignment. Working with this sense of respect for yourself will allow you to feel passionate about the work you are doing but not leave you crushed when it doesn't go so well. This is important because when we feel hurt or uncomfortable we often make decision based off of emotion rather than logic.

In recent days we have become too familiar with the effects of underestimation. On a daily basis we see business leaders who underestimate the power of the law, military leaders who underestimated the power of the enemy, and students who underestimate the consequences of their behavior. When we act as leaders we must never underestimate any part of our projects. If found underestimating the work required we would find ourselves in a panic, rushing to get the task completed. If we underestimate the talents of our associates we will be left with resentment and a more difficult task. Even underestimating something as simple as communication could result in a misunderstanding for years to come. The job of a leader is to plan, plan and plan for

success! When we lay the groundwork to completing our assignments we must always be thoughtful and attentive, never underestimating any part of the task that lays before us.

Leadership is full of many challenges and difficulties. In order to be effective in our leading we must have a plan of action. Careful study of the way in which we lead will enable us to inspire the greatest success around us. To be an effective leader we must first be excellent communicators. This skill coupled with an extensive knowledge about our subject matter will help us to spread our vision. As we enlist the support of others will be equipped with a persuasive argument for success. Our passion will inspire them to become strategically involved in the organization of our projects, making it all the more possible to achieve our goals. Armed with a plan for success we will remember to rely on our followers with the greatest respect for their talents and abilities. All along using our passion as a tool for success, not an obstacle to change. Finally we will work hard to ensure our success by never underestimating the difficulties of being a leader, thus always prepared to achieve our goals.

ELI has been a great opportunity to grow as a leader. While sometimes the class was a little boring or my project became challenging, I really enjoyed it!