

My Personal Leadership Philosophy and Who I Have Become

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INTRODUCTION

With my experience through the Emerging Leader Institute I can honestly say that I've changed-for the better, with a more positive outlook. My leadership skills have improved, primarily because the guest speakers that presented information to us, in correspondence with our book, Leadership the Challenge, by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner. From the repetition of acts, that improve leadership skills, throughout the book to guest speakers reiterating them, I believe many of these details seem to be engraved into the back of my head. Because of this, I've used what was learned in class to my advantage. With my individual service project of holding a prom dress drive for a local

high school I was able to actually execute and practice each of these tid-bits along the way.

CHAPTER 1: WHO I'VE BECOME

As a leader, looking to improve what I already have, I was ready to grasp any opportunity available. Because of this, I was very excited to jump on board. After completing my individual service project I feel I have become more conscious of how I communicate. Most certainly I have more confidence in the way I talk. In portraying, or addressing, my service project idea to Bryan Station High School I learned I had to be careful of what I said and be sure to cut straight to the point. I wanted to use mature language- over time with writing letters and calling adults, this is step to bettering my communication skills.

I've realized that many a times discouragement can get in the way. However, I am very optimistic so even though one would think a little dissuasion would halt my project, I look at it as mere motivation to keep my project going. As a leader, I've become more aware of the obstacles and now can pin point the reason of those roadblocks. For example, for almost a three-week period I had no donations in dresses. This kept me motivated because I wanted to prove everyone else wrong. So I did just that- and ended up overcoming these hurdles with 60 dresses in hand.

Going along these same lines, adamancy is where it's at. The more dedicated to your project, the better the project will become. Over time I realized that the more and more I wanted this to develop and create something so large, the better it did become. A salon and teachers contacted me about my project to make this drive more than just a small project for young girls. We incorporated a raffle for free tickets, the radio became

involved (moreover with the salon), and sorority members were more than glad to help me. I've become more aware about that "fire in your belly" and what it really creates for you as a leader. It all builds up to this fantastic idea, which once began as a small project.

Very importantly, though, collaboration had some control with my project. I learned to mediate my problems with the teachers at school to make my project more successful. I've become more open to the idea of cooperation and how necessary it is for a project to thrive. Rhonda, the Junior-Class Sponsor and Prom Committee Head, gave me ideas on how to change things around to fit the needs of their school. I gave her feedback of what I thought, or how I wanted the project to be implemented, so we combined our ideas to fit the needs of both of us.

Overall, I've become more than just a leader with some "traits" if you will. One of our guest speakers, Dr. Gordon Holdbein said we should ask ourselves, "Am I becoming the kind of person who others want to follow?" I can now respond yes, because I have *become* better at each one of these characteristics. This question is a great focus and reminder of how to stay true to myself and others.

CHAPTER 2: MY PERSONAL LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

Of course everyone has his or her own opinions as to what leadership entails. As for me, I know at least three characteristics should prevail in any project, operation, or chair that a leader has: Enthusiasm, ambition, and discouragement.

Discouragement seems like an oddball in the bunch- but hear me out. If there weren't any discouragement or obstacles to overcome, how would anyone stay motivated towards the ending goal? For me, as aforementioned, when someone or an obstacles is in

my way, I do all that I can to go above and beyond to prove them wrong. It only makes you stronger because you can surely learn from any mistakes or mishaps that occur during the process. Therefore, even though discouragement seems so pessimistic, everyone needs a little every once in a while to keep you going on track.

Adding to my philosophy, ambition goes in hand with that. In order to receive and handle discouragement in a reasonable way, one has to take that criticism and turn it into ambition. If it weren't for my adamancy and ambition, I would have not been so successful with my prom dress drive. I did follow-ups upon follow-ups- even though it was time consuming, it reaped what I wanted- success. From knocking on doors, to emails and posting signs, it made my project more known. With a little ambition the job will get done.

Lastly, it doesn't hurt to have an enthusiastic character either. Followers and other leaders with whom you're working will be more responsive to an idea if you're enthusiastic and sound excited. Nobody wants a negative Nancy on their side of the project. I learned that if I keep a happy personality, others will smile and be glad that I was doing something for others. Like Adam said in his presentation, "NO means change," and that's exactly right. I won't let anything stand in my way from completing a project- if someone says no then I go on and decide that I must have not needed their help anyway and find someone more willing.

CHAPTER 3: PASS ON WISDOM AND LEARNED IDEAS

Beyond what my personal leadership philosophy entails, I would have to say that leading by example is the most prevalent way to exemplify leadership. When we

determined what our leadership style is, I ended up being an “encouraging leader.” I pretty much knew I already was just by the way I’ve learned from my mom. My mom has always been the first to compliment, motivate, or boost morale of team no matter what the situation. Over the years I’ve learned from this and have made a mental note that others truly enjoy a compliment here and there. I’ve also witnessed my mom encouraging others even at her work. I was there for only one day to volunteer and it was quite obvious that she practically went out of her way to encourage a co-worker with her frustrating assignment. It’s from example and experience that you can learn the most.

If we hold true to the old saying, “Do as I say, not as I do,” leaders wouldn’t develop into who they have become today. If a leader of an organization was to only *tell* his or her followers what to do, it would merely be a management position. It is a leader’s position to be right in there with the group, showing others what to do. Interacting with his or her followers is important too, so they can see first-hand what should and should not be done. For example, I would in retail at a local shoe store. If manager only *told* me what I should do, I would still be clueless to this day as to how I’m to work on straightening shoes, customer service conversations, and preventing theft. However, Tonya, my manager, does an excellent way of *showing* me and my co-workers how to interact with customers. She has helped me shape part of who I’ve become as a leader as well.

CONCLUSION

Basically each part of my philosophy feeds into the other in some sort of way. Enthusiasm and ambition overcomes those hurdles from discouragement. In passing on

what I've learned, leading by example is the first and foremost way to learn the fundamentals of leadership. Also, when figuring out what your mission and vision is, it's a great way to practice and implement these examples. You have to begin somewhere and just as I have done, practicing them on a simple project will only help you grow in long-run. Guest speakers were pretty reliable when it came down to what a leader should and should not do. I'm glad that they were there to guide us along through our projects.