

Servant Leadership by Robert K. Greenleaf

While servant leadership is a timeless concept, the phrase “servant leadership” was coined by [Robert K. Greenleaf](#) in "The Servant as Leader", an essay that he first published in 1970. In that essay, Greenleaf said:

“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 one 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 people’s 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 not be further deprived?”



Characteristics of Servant Leadership

Scholars generally agree that these characteristics are central to the development of a servant-leader:

1. **Listening:** A servant leader puts the emphasis upon listening effectively to others.
2. **Empathy:** A servant leader needs to understand others' feelings and perspectives.
3. **Healing:** A servant leader helps foster each person's emotional and spiritual health and wholeness.
4. **Awareness:** A servant leader understands his or her own values and feelings, strengths and weaknesses.
5. **Persuasion:** A servant leader influences others through their persuasiveness.
6. **Conceptualization:** A servant leader needs to integrate present realities and future possibilities.
7. **Foresight:** A servant leader needs to have a well developed sense of intuition about how the past, present, and future are connected.
8. **Stewardship:** A servant leader is a steward who holds an organization's resources in trust for the greater good.
9. **Commitment to the growth of people:** A servant leader is responsible for serving the need of others.
10. **Building community:** A servant leader is to help create a sense of community among people.

It has to be emphasized that these 10 characteristics are by no means **exhaustive**. They should not be interpreted as a certain manner to behave and they do not represent the best method to gain aims. Rather every person shall reflect if these characteristics can be useful for his/her **personal development**.

For Reflection

Which characteristic stands out for you?

What characteristics are most needed by your Conference or Regional Council right now?

In the context of leadership styles

The most common division of leadership styles is the distinction between **autocratic**, **participative** and **laissez-faire** leadership styles. The authoritarian style of leadership requires clearly defined tasks and monitoring their execution and results. The decision-making responsibility rests with the executive. In contrast to the autocratic, the practice of a participative leadership style involves others in decision-making. More extensive tasks are delegated. The laissez-faire style of leadership is negligible in practice.

Servant leadership can be most likely associated with the participative leadership style. The authoritarian leadership style does not correspond to the guiding principle. The highest priority of a servant leader is to encourage, support and enable subordinates to unfold their full potential and abilities. This leads to an obligation to delegate responsibility and engage in participative decision-making.

Models

The Center for Servant Leadership at the Pastoral Institute in Georgia defines servant leadership as a lifelong journey that includes discovery of one's self, a desire to serve others, and a commitment to lead. Servant-leaders continually strive to be trustworthy, self-aware, humble, caring, visionary, empowering, relational, competent, good stewards, and community builders.

Kent Keith, author of *The Case for Servant Leadership*, states that servant leadership is ethical, practical, and meaningful. He identifies seven key practices of servant leaders: self-awareness, listening, changing the pyramid, developing your colleagues, coaching not controlling, unleashing the energy and intelligence of others, and foresight.'

Unlike leadership approaches with a top-down hierarchical style, servant leadership instead emphasizes collaboration, trust, empathy, and the ethical use of power. At heart, the individual is a servant first, making the conscious decision to lead in order to better serve others, not to increase their own power. The objective is to enhance the growth of individuals in the organization and increase teamwork and personal involvement.

For Reflection

“Following Christ’s example, the Presidents at all levels of the Society endeavour to be servant leaders. They provide an encouraging atmosphere in which the talents, capacities and spiritual charisms of the members are identified, developed and put to the service of the poor or to the St Vincent de Paul Society. The President of the Conference or Council will have special responsibility for promoting Vincentian spirituality.” (The Rule: 3.11)

What behaviors do you think ‘provide an encouraging atmosphere’?



Consider this...



Review the ten characteristics of Servant Leadership. What characteristics are most needed in your Conference or Regional Council right now?

Which of these most needed characteristics stand out for you?

What do you need to do to *'provide an encouraging atmosphere in which the talents, capacities and spiritual charisms of the members are identified, developed and put to the service of the poor or to the St Vincent de Paul Society'* (The Rule: 3.11)?

On Becoming a Servant Leader

Seven myths and seven paradoxes of Christian leadership

By Dan R. Ebener from Sojourners Magazine, February 2011

Servant leadership is a paradoxical concept that is as old as Lao Tzu and Jesus and as new as Dorothy Day and Desmond Tutu. In a world desperately in need of new leaders and fresh models of leadership, now is a good time to examine the myths and paradoxes of what Christians mean by "servant leadership."

The key to unleashing transformative social change is developing leaders who will transform systems. Leaders transform themselves, people around them, organizations they lead, and, ultimately, communities they serve. Servant leaders foster servant churches, which become change agents for their neighbourhoods and beyond.

Servant leadership may seem paradoxical to some, but that is precisely what we would expect from a leadership style modelled by Jesus. When management educator Robert Greenleaf coined the phrase in the 1970s, he intentionally selected a paradoxical term because it epitomized the paradoxical nature of the teachings and example of Jesus, who used parables to teach wisdom and who demonstrated the ultimate irony with his life and resurrection. Unfortunately, some self-proclaimed proponents of servant leadership now are equating it with everything from visionary leadership to effective time management.



Servant leaders are motivated first to serve and then to lead. The servant leader wants to serve rather than be served (Mark 10:45). The servant leader is more interested in giving than receiving (Matthew 5:40-42). The servant leader is a steward who wants to give back to God, family, and community.

Non-servant leaders, on the other hand, or "pedestal leaders," tend to command people and control what they do. These leaders have little interest in listening to the needs, interests, or ideas of others. They might call themselves "public servants," but they act as if they are interested in serving only themselves. They lack the humility to understand that leaders need people as much as people need leaders.

The paradoxical nature of servant leadership can be viewed through the beatitudes. After Jesus assembled his disciples, his leaders-in-training, he delivered his Sermon on the Mount, which included his philosophy of leadership. The eight beatitudes are particularly instructive for leaders: They are to be humble and meek, sorrowful for their



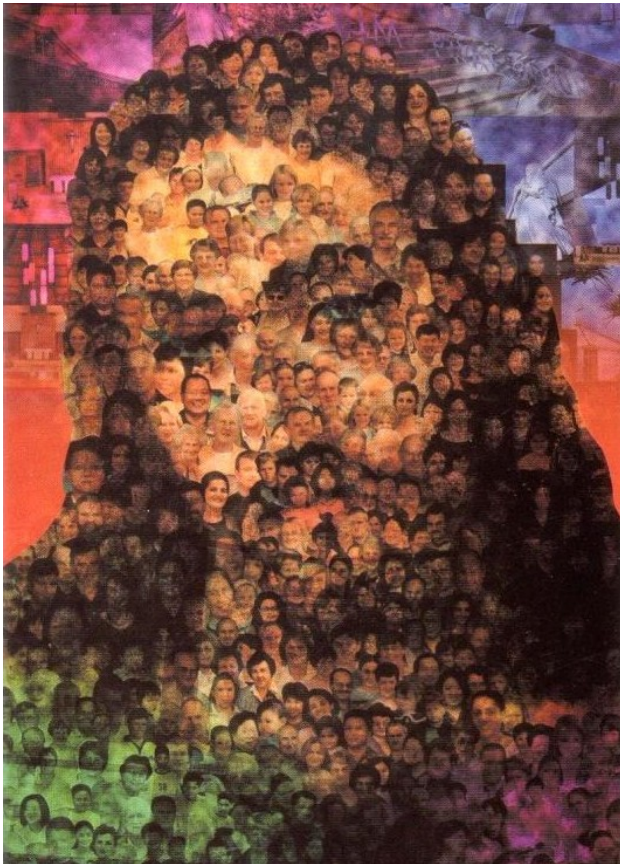
shortcomings, passionate about social justice, merciful, compassionate, pure of heart, peaceful, and courageous in the face of adversity (Matthew 5:3-12).

In the same way that the beatitudes and parables of Jesus reveal a sense of paradox, servant leadership is full of paradox. Let's look at seven myths and seven paradoxes of servant leadership.

1. Myth: Servant leadership is soft.

When business consultant and author Jim Collins was presenting the leadership style of his "good to great" companies, he wanted to describe them as servant leaders. But his research team convinced him that this term was too soft.

Paradox: Servant leadership is neither hard nor soft. There is nothing soft about dealing with complex human interaction and organizational chaos. Once the servant decides to lead, all that we know about leadership comes into play. Servant leaders address adaptive challenges, resolve conflict collaboratively, enhance communication, invite people to participate, build synergistic teams, plan strategically, and develop the leadership potential in others. Each of these can take years of practice to hone the necessary skills.



On the other hand, the concept of servant leadership is not hard to understand. Like Jesus, the servant leader nurtures a kind and gentle heart that guides decisions and actions. Servant leaders put the welfare of others ahead of their own (Matthew 7:12).

2. Myth: Servant leaders cannot hold positions of authority.

Powerful positions are often pursued through personal connections, political deals, or family heritage instead of personal character, people skills, and clarity of vision.

Paradox: Servant leadership is not a position, but people in positions can be servant leaders. Servant leadership is relational, not positional. It can emerge from anyone, anywhere. The servant leader is interested in coaching, mentoring, facilitating, and developing members into leaders. This can be done

with or without a position of authority. Surprisingly, servant leaders rotate between the roles of leadership, management, and followership.

Leadership is about serving people as Jesus did. Leaders are appointed to serve, not to rule. Leadership can emerge from anyone who is driven by a sense of mission and a commitment to serve the group. While the positional leaders of Jesus' time lorded it over them," he asserted to his disciples: "Not so with you" (Mark 10:35-45).

3. **Myth: Servant leaders convince people to follow their vision of the future.**

When leaders are appointed to a new position, people expect their leader to articulate a vision for them.

Paradox: Servant leaders create a sense of shared vision with the people they lead. The servant leaders and the people are co-creators and co-owners of that vision. This involves a multi-directional process that is primarily about listening, not speaking. The paradox of listening is that people who listen well can be very persuasive.



The essence of leadership is influence, change, and vision. Servant leaders influence people by effecting a change of heart, mind, spirit, and action. They transform organizations and communities by changing policies, structures, strategies, and culture. They facilitate a process whereby the group creates its own vision, or direction, based on the mission.



Can you think of an example when you have seen a Leader unite people around a common goal?

4. **Myth: Servant leaders are selfless.**



Some people believe that in order to truly serve others, a person must reject self-interest so he or she can overcome selfishness.

Paradox: The servant leader is humble, not selfless. Humility is not selflessness. It is a healthy middle space between selfishness and selflessness. Servant leaders need to be assertive about their own needs and interests while also cooperative about the needs and interests of others.

For example, when in conflict, the person who cannot express her or his own self-interest does not give the opportunity to the other party in the conflict to collaborate on those interests. Servant leadership is about being very aware of, concerned about, and collaborative on the interests of others. However, that is not the same as having no interests at all or being selfless.

5. Myth: Servant leaders do not get great results.

Business or organization leaders can be devoted Christians who want to lead like Jesus. But as they talk about this in the workplace, they are told it would not work in the "real world."

Paradox: Servant leaders are ambitious, but direct their ambition toward the mission, not themselves. When Jesus' 12 leadership trainees were arguing about who was the greatest among them, or when James and John asked to be on his right and his left, Jesus did not admonish his disciples for striving for greatness (Mark 9:33-35, 10:35-45). But he reminded them that leadership is not about being the most important or sitting on a pedestal, as the religious and political leaders did in the time of Jesus (Luke 22:24-27).

When the leader is intrinsically motivated by the mission, vision, and values of the organization, and by interests that are not self-serving, then others become intrinsically motivated as well. Research shows that intrinsically motivated workers get great results. The giving and serving nature of the servant leader inspires others to give freely, to serve each other, and eventually to emerge as leaders themselves. Servant leaders ask people to make sacrifices that are countercultural, and thus begin to change the culture.

6. Myth: Servant leaders are powerless.

Unbridled power is seen as an evil. Earthly power was one of the temptations of Christ in the desert. According to Lord Acton, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Paradox: Servant leaders gain power as they serve others. Servant leadership presents many adaptive challenges that are viewed as false dichotomies, such as, for example, service vs. power, purpose vs. profit, or mission vs. money. The servant leader expands and extends the power generated by leadership by increasing service for, by, and of the people.



Power is the ability to act, a means of accomplishing a mission. For the servant leader, power is a means to generate more service for the benefit of all. Power is not an end unto itself for the leader. Power is freely given and shared instead of taken and, counterintuitively, it grows exponentially. People are thus empowered to play their roles and to do their jobs more successfully.

7. Myth: Servant leaders "do unto others what they would have others do unto them."

The Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12) is familiar to virtually every religious tradition and is synonymous with care and compassion for others.

Paradox: Servant leaders practice both the "Iron Rule" and the "Golden Rule."

The Golden Rule may work with strangers. But in an organizational setting, the leader listens to others and takes their needs, interests, and values into consideration before making decisions. For example, a reward that one leader might find motivating may not be the same reward that motivates another person.

Given the relational nature of leadership, the Golden Rule should be tempered by the Iron Rule, which suggests that the leader does not "do unto others" what they can do for themselves. Servant leaders delegate responsibilities to others, which includes providing support and feedback. They give credit to God and to the people they work with, rather than being the Teflon leader who deflects the blame and grabs all the credit.

The best test of servant leadership is whether the followers become servant leaders themselves - willing to make sacrifices, wanting to give back, and devoted to serving each other and their communities. For the servant leader, it is not about how many followers you lead, but how many leaders you develop.



"For the servant leader, it is not about how many followers you lead, but how many leaders you develop?"

1. Do you agree with this?
2. How are you enabling others to take on leadership roles?

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Ten Characteristics of a Servant Leader

1. **Listening**
A servant leader puts the emphasis upon listening effectively to others.
2. **Empathy**
A servant leader needs to understand others' feelings and perspectives.
3. **Healing**
A servant leader helps foster each person's emotional and spiritual health and wholeness.
4. **Awareness**
A servant leader understands his or her own values and feelings, strengths and weaknesses.
5. **Persuasion**
A servant leader influences others through their persuasiveness.
6. **Conceptualisation**
A servant leader needs to integrate present realities and future possibilities.
7. **Foresight**
A servant leader needs to have a well-developed sense of intuition about how the past, present, and future are connected.
8. **Stewardship**
A servant leader is a steward who holds an organisation's resources in trust for the greater good.
9. **Commitment to the growth of people**
A servant leader is **responsible** for serving the need of others.
10. **Building community**
A servant leader is to help create a sense of community among people

Quiz

Review the ten characteristics of a Servant Leader and rate each one according to how frequently you apply them in your leadership role.

Use the following scale to rate them by circling the appropriate number.

1 = never 2 = rarely 3 = sometimes 4 = often 5 = always

Characteristics	Your rating				
1. Listening to others	1	2	3	4	5
2. Empathy – understand others	1	2	3	4	5
3. Healing – foster wholeness in others	1	2	3	4	5
4. Awareness of self	1	2	3	4	5
5. Lead through persuasion rather than position	1	2	3	4	5
6. Conceptualising - dream great dreams	1	2	3	4	5
7. Foresight and intuition	1	2	3	4	5
8. Stewardship – resources in trust for greater good	1	2	3	4	5
9. Foster growths in others	1	2	3	4	5
10. Build community	1	2	3	4	5

Which characteristics do you apply most frequently?

Which characteristics do you want to improve upon?

Are there other characteristics you think should be included?

Reference: Adapted from Creative Discoveries Training and Consulting

Mentoring, Empowering, and Enabling Others Self-Assessment



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Purpose of this exercise:

1. Enable you to identify the behaviours that will help you to mentor, empower, and enable others.
2. To identify areas of strength for yourself and note areas for improvement.

Date completed: _____

Behaviours	✓ if this is helpful in mentoring and enabling others	On a scale of 1-5 where would you rate your proficiency in this skill?
		Needs development Proficient
1. Provide support and advice to members/other leaders		1 2 3 4 5
2. Ensure that training happens for members and leaders		1 2 3 4 5
3. Ask new people to assist in organising events or activities and support them in what they are doing		1 2 3 4 5
4. Allow people to approach delegated tasks in their own way, not expecting that they will do the task exactly as you would		1 2 3 4 5
5. Ask for and listen to feedback		1 2 3 4 5
6. Engage members in times of reflection and the gifts they have to share with others, i.e. 'Debrief with them'.		1 2 3 4 5
7. Ensure action by following up with people who take on projects/jobs		1 2 3 4 5
8. Look for new ways to empower and motivate others		1 2 3 4 5
9. Enjoy collaborative projects		1 2 3 4 5
10. Accountable for what I say and do		1 2 3 4 5
11. Be curious about others' interests and hopes		1 2 3 4 5
12. To be approachable for advice or assistance		1 2 3 4 5
13. Create a welcoming and good working environment		1 2 3 4 5

Behaviours	✓ if this is helpful in mentoring and enabling others	On a scale of 1-5 where would you rate your proficiency in this skill?				
14. Affirm people as they engage with others, try new things, seek out information		1	2	3	4	5
15. Chair/lead meetings where I encourage all members to participate in discussions		1	2	3	4	5
16. Keep confidences		1	2	3	4	5
17. Willingness to try new things/flexible; encourage innovation		1	2	3	4	5
18. Engender a culture where we all learn from mistakes/past experience		1	2	3	4	5
Add other behaviours that are not mentioned						
19.						
20.						
21.						
22.						
23.						

Development Plan

Review your responses and identify 3-5 behaviours you need to develop further so you can better enable others to embrace leadership.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

1: GROW Coaching Questions

The GROW model is a simple method for goal setting or problem solving that has been used in coaching sessions since the late 1980s.



We've included a lot of different questions so you can now choose the best ones to help your coaching session flow.

Goal

What do you want to achieve?

What is important to you right now?

What would you like to get from the next 30 minutes?

What areas do you want to work on?

Describe your perfect world.

What do you want to achieve as a result of this session?

What will make you feel this time has been well spent?

Reality

Where are you now in relation to your goal?

On a scale of 1 -10 where are you?

What has contributed to your success so far?

What skills/knowledge/attributes do you have?

What progress have you made so far?

What is working well right now?

What is required of you?

Options

What are your options?

Name 5 options that could help this situation.

How have you tackled this/ a similar situation before?

What could you do differently?

Who do you know who has encountered a similar situation?

If anything was possible, what would you do?

What else?

Way forward

Which options work best for you?

What one small step are you going to take now?

What actions will you take?

When are you going to start?

Who will help you?

How will you know you have been successful?

How will you ensure that you do it?

On a scale of 1 -10 how committed /motivated are you to doing it?

2: NOW WOW HOW

Coaching Questions

Now - Current

Where are we at now?

What have we got?

What is the current state?

What are we doing?

What are the burning issues?

Wow - Future

What do we want?

What are the options?

What are the alternatives?

What does the future look like?

How? - Actions

How will we get there?

What actions will we take?

Who will do what?

What could be done?

What are the priorities?

What are we going to do now?

The NOW / WOW / HOW model is another simple method for helping another person to set goals or solve problems.



You can choose the questions you prefer to keep the conversation flowing.

What happens when a leader leaves?

Leading well needs to include leaving well

10 tips for departing your elected position

No elected leadership role is forever. Even the most essential and inspirational leaders will eventually leave the position they hold, and it's never too early to start preparing for that day.

Here are ten things that a leader can do to ensure a smooth handover.

1. Take charge

When a leader leaves, it's theoretically the members' responsibility to elect the next leader. In reality, as a leader within the Society, you need to initiate the succession-planning process, ideally with the support of your Regional and Central Council.

Therefore as a leader you can, and should, initiate succession planning.

2. Start early

To make sure everyone is fully prepared with a formal succession plan in place, you should start thinking about who could replace you within the first year of your election.

3. Promote your departure date

Be transparent about the date your position comes up for election...and remind everyone at regular intervals so they too are thinking ahead.

4. Recognise your two new roles

As a leader in the process of leaving your elected position you are still required to be a leader and undertake your regular responsibilities.

But, in addition to this you have two new roles: preparing the Society for transition, and preparing yourself for the next phase of your service.

5. Be a good communicator

Think about all the relationships you hold within and outside the Society – and plan who needs to be told about your successor and when they need to be told.

6. Engage other leaders as soon as possible

No doubt you've performed well in your leadership role, and there may be some anxieties about your departure. So, letting all members and other leaders within the Society know about your departure, and approaching them with a draft exit strategy as soon as possible will alleviate stress and increase engagement.

7. Prepare the Conference members, Regional and Central Councils

As the old adage goes – leave the place in better condition than when you found it. That means revisit your commitments and work with your Regional Council and Central Council President to plan what you think your successor might focus and build on in the future.

8. Prepare yourself

Prepare yourself as best you can for any new roles you may be taking on by giving yourself a break in between roles, if possible, or at the very least not having your two roles overlap.

9. Manage the drama

Whether you are heading to a new role within the Society or taking on less responsibility for now, the transition may be stressful, for yourself and for the Conference, Regional Council or Central Council.

Through great planning, open communication with everyone, and listening to concerns members may have, you can go some way to alleviating some of the stress.

10. Leave gracefully and decisively

Plan your handover to a new leader as thoroughly as possible, but let them step up and take the lead.

If you plan to have a different, ongoing leadership role within the Society, you will need to make sure your President's responsibilities are clearly deferred to your successor.

Suggest a check-in timeline, where you can check back in with your successor to see if there's any additional help you can offer when they've had some weeks or months to settle into the role.

Reference: adapted from the article that first appeared
in: <http://www.nfppeople.com.au/2014/12/whathappens-when-a-leader-leaves-10-tips-for-departing-nfp-senior-managers-and-ceos/>

Consider this...

Who could be potential successor/s to you? When will you discuss this with them?



Have you discussed your potential successor/s with your Central Council President?

What preparation / mentoring / training might your successor/s benefit from to prepare them for your role?