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FUTURENOW CONSULTING

SERVANT LEADERSHIP COACHING SYSTEM

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EFS SERVANT LEADERSHIP FOCUS

A monthly newsletter to promote and stimulate servant leadership ideas & tools into the Viox culture.

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Transformational Stories

Leadership Begins At Home

By: Dawn Cassara

"Leadership begins at home." - At least that is what Richard Branson is postulating and asking others to share their experience. He's saying more that it's taught, mostly by example, rather than genetic. I certainly agree, and would like to add independence, which some may say that that is part of leadership, maybe even a requirement.

Both my parents were leaders and very independent – in their thinking and in their actions. I was raised in north Mississippi in a town where racial social inequality is still part of the culture. I'm proud to say that my parents were not part of that culture. They taught me from a very early age that everyone was equal in God's eyes. I remember the day integration came to our school and the teacher put the cutest, tiniest little black girl in front of me in the classroom. I now realize that she did that because she knew that I'd treat her just like anyone else – she became a friend right away. I also now realize that I was being a leader without even knowing it.

My father started a printing business after he was discharged from the Coast Guard after WWII. I started working there from a very young age – just cleaning up at first, but learning the entire business included running presses and also the basics of design – he was constantly reinforcing that I could be anything that I wanted to be when I grew up. He did so well with that printing shop that he put me and my horse through 6 years of college and left enough when he passed to take care of my mother who lived to be 91, and also me and my family through some hard times.

My mother was a Wave stationed in DC during WWII – she was a Japanese Code Breaker. She went through rigorous testing to earn that position. From what I understand, there were only 20 or so that qualified. I'm convinced that programming comes naturally to me because of her logical mind. She also started teaching me to read (and play the piano) at 3 years old and loved to tell the story of the optometrist being amazed that I could read the eye chart at three. She was never happy unless she was learning something new. She even went back to college at Ole Miss at the same time I was going – we'd wave at each other across the campus in passing.

Leadership Begins At Home (continued)

Both were leaders in organizations that supported the community – my mother was the head of the Eastern Star (Worthy Matron) for the state of Mississippi, taught Cub Scouts (I was the only female cub scout ever), then Girl Scouts. My Dad was a leader in Rotary Club and was a Deacon in church. He took the only dangerous job the church had – he helped people passing through town in need. I remember he was called out quite a few times in the middle of the night, and I remember someone attempted to mug him once (didn't happen – he was only 5'8" but you really didn't want to mess with him). If that's not leadership, I don't know what is. Another trait leaders have in common is competitiveness. My Dad taught me that competition was a good thing and fun to boot. He played tennis competitively, and then was a semi-pro golfer - our basement was filled with trophies, silver trays and plaques. I'm the most competitive person I know – and I'm also a graceful loser on occasion (from my dad). Creativity has to be part of leadership, too. Mom was more creative and wrote recipes, recipe books, and just loved cooking, which looking back was amazing because she never weighed more than 98 pounds until after she retired. She also loved to paint – I treasure her artwork and display it prominently in my home. She made all my clothes when I was growing up – that may have been more out of necessity, but she certainly enjoyed sewing, making all kinds of crafty things, even quilts. I still have one to finish – who knows if I will ever get to that! Back to independence, she loved to travel and if my dad couldn't go, she'd take my brother and/or me and just go. Then when we lost my brother, my parents taught me how to handle grief and loss by loving each other, and me, even more.

Then both my parents taught me how to die – they both went down fighting until they no longer had the strength to fight, then they accepted their fate peacefully, my dad with cancer and my mom with pneumonia.

So Richard, I guess the proof is in the pudding – I worked as a technical consultant for over 15 years in big business, and then had to quit to raise my son (who is autistic). But that didn't stop me (persistence - another trait of leadership). I learned web technologies and internet marketing on my own and started a business, later to create (creativeness) a data driven software system that is a base for any tracking system, with different templates for CRM, Referrals and any type of businesses.

I couldn't stop there, of course (competitiveness) – I had to include everything a small to mid-sized business might need in one system and provide the internet marketing they need, too! I really put it on the market a few months ago and am already attracting larger clients and have now gone global. I had no idea how well I had designed it until I got a demo from a reseller of Microsoft Dynamics – the major difference I could see was the pricing! And I did this all on my own (independence) and have recently found the programming help I need for scalability, filled my quality assurance position with a young man who is only handicapped physically whom I met through one of the charities I work for (charity), and we'll be using interns for a few more positions to help them get their start in business and marketing (sharing knowledge). Of course, I had two people who I couldn't have done it without - my husband who's always supported me, and my business manager, who allowed me to work off her fees by developing software for her. So if a child is a measure of their parents, mine must have been pretty good. My father passed away 21 years ago now, but I again had to use their teachings about how to handle loss into practice last year when my mother passed away, but to be honest, I was crying as I wrote the part about her. They definitely made me who I am, and to have a few other traits - they taught me to be honest, faithful and also to have pride and show humbleness in everything I do. I'll never forget them as long as I live.

Love is the best quality they taught me, of all the others.

Parents' are First Leadership Models

Michael McKinnley

Parents are the earliest and most influential influences on a child. Their examples profoundly affect the kind of leaders they become. Leadership training takes time (*think quantity* not just "quality") and guidance in every facet of a child's life from early on. Additionally, **leadership needs to be modeled by the parents.** It helps if you view all of this in the long-term. The big picture view assists in smoothing out the immature peaks and valleys and helps keep your goals on track. Here are some (not comprehensive) ideas to think on:

Take time to know your child. Working with a child's personality, a parent needs to learn to develop that child's individual traits and abilities and sometimes temper strengths that left unchecked would become a liability. For example, an assertive, outgoing personality is a great trait in a leader, but without self-control it can be seen as overly aggressive and controlling.

Take the time to point out where they can learn from the example of others. Use examples and outcomes of decisions of both right and wrong approaches to situations. Teach them cause and effect. Choices have consequences.

Take the time to understand what problems and issues your child is dealing with and then guide them to the right decisions by applying the right principles. By instilling principles rather than pat answers to problems, you will give them tools to work with that they can apply over and over again in their life.

Take the time to praise them when they make the right choices and gently show them the choice they missed when they go astray. Give them age appropriate responsibilities and let them stand or fall on their choices. (Note: Self-esteem comes from knowing you did do or are doing the right thing and should be praised. It's not generated from unsupported, manipulative comments designed to make kids—or anyone else for that matter—feel good.)

Take the time to involve them in family activities and work. This will help them learn teamwork (sharing and considering others) and a good work ethic.

Why do all this? Pat Williams (senior vice president of the Orlando Magic) in his book, *Coaching Your Kids to be Leaders*, quotes Jackson University football coach Steve Gilbert,

"I tell young people, and it feels good to be a leader! Success and failure are part of the adventure of life. Young people need to see that good leaders are important in their community—and there are great rewards for being a good leader. Those rewards include a sense of satisfaction and a feeling that what you are doing is meaningful and significant. You don't always win when you lead, but that's okay. Young people should be rewarded and encouraged for stepping up and leading, no matter whether they succeed or fail."

10 Characteristics of a Servant Leader's Communication

Michael J. Stabile, Ph.D.

"A person cannot teach what he/she does know nor lead where he/she does not go." We lead by example! Servant leaders holistically whether personally or professional focus on consistency in their *"talk and walk."* Here are 10 Characteristics to check our communication in all of our relationships.

1. **Listening**: When there is a problem, traditional leaders often react first, listen second (possibly). Servant-leaders respond to a problem by *listening first*. With discipline, a non-servant can become a servant by disciplining himself or herself to listen until it is second nature.

2. **Acceptance and Empathy:** The servant-leader *wants* to understand and empathize with others, and they have true interest in their followers. They don't automatically reject a person, even though they are sometimes forced to refuse to accept bad behaviors or bad performance. Every human being is imperfect, and the servant-leader recognizes this fact. Servant-leaders are committed to the growth of the people they serve.

3. **Honesty**: Trust and respect are the basis of all human interaction. Without trust and respect our words are void and meaningless to the hearer. Without relational trust there is no community. Honesty in our communication builds trust by thinking of the hearer first. ***Is this communication, true, is it accurate, is it needful, and is it necessary***. Speak the truth in love or with "good "intentions.

4. **Awareness and Perception:** Servant-leaders are highly alert and open to new opportunities. They are also able to see "the big picture" and how it affects everyone around them. A servant-leader is also able to stand back from a high-pressure situation and compose his or herself so as to work more effectively. Their communication and body language has a calming effect rather than triggering anxiousness in others.

5. **Persuasion:** Rather than using their authority to force people to follow, a servant-leader uses persuasion. They are clear and persistent. And while some leaders take on huge institutions, others lead by persuading one person at a time or by taking one small action at a time. They empower rather than control others with their words.

6. **Imagination:** Servant-leaders are able to dream great dreams. And they are able to help others see the great dream – *without saying too much.* They don't, however, force others to stay within a narrow definition of that dream because that would limit the growth of everyone involved – including the servant-leader.

7. **Withdrawal:** A servant-leader knows how to pace his or herself, and they also know how to determine what is urgent and what is less important. This allows the servant-leader to have the energy and resilience to cope with emergencies. In communication, they don't put undue pressure on others due to their lack of prioritizing.

8. **Foresight**: This is a skill servant-leaders develop in order to sense what will happen in the future and when it will happen. They learn to look at the present, compare it with the past, and make a fairly good prediction for the future. The process continues constantly, allowing the servant-leader to make choices – and not just react to events as they unfold. In communication, they are proactive versus reactive and they bring certainty and calm versus anxiety and chaos to others.

9. **Conceptualizing:** Servant-leaders think beyond day-to-day realities. They love the people or organizations they serve; they have a clear *vision* of what must be done; they are passionate and dedicated; and most importantly, they have faith in the ability of the people they serve to accomplish great goals. Thus, their communication brings confidence and encouragement versus fear and discouragement.

10. **Healing:** Our society has moved from face-to-face communities to large, faceless institutions and the technologies of social networking. In this process, people have been hurt in any number of ways – including the loss of love, insensitivity, and ethical behavior. According to Robert K. Greenleaf, *"servant-leaders help rebuild communities, "face-to-face groups" so that "the liability of each [person] for the other … is unlimited, or as close to it as it is possible to get."* Servant leaders use their words to build up and not tear down. *"Life and death are found in the power of the tongue."* Language is either a healer that brings courage into a culture or it is toxic. Servant-leaders help build community so that these damages and hurts can be healed as much as possible.

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