

Best Practices in Servant Leadership

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Much has been written about organizational leadership and management. Numerous MBA and Leadership programs continue to improve their curriculum. But are the graduates from these programs adequately prepared for today's turbulent and volatile world? Are we raising the right kind of leaders for a complex and uncertain future?

The nature of both work and the workplace has changed drastically (Billett, 2006). The recent state of corporate scandals (Wong, 2002a), the increasing diversity of the workforce, and the quickening pace of social and technological change require a fundamental rethinking in leadership and management.

The focus of leadership needs to be shifted from **process and outcome to people and the future**. The new challenge for management and leadership education is threefold: (a) How to develop workers and unleash their creative potentials, (b) How to create a positive workplace that will attract and retain talented knowledge workers, and (c) How to reinforce innovations and risk-taking to adapt to an uncertain future. New competencies are required to develop and manage the social/emotional/spiritual capital. New types of leaders are needed to create new futures.

At present in every organization, huge amounts of valuable resources are wasted each day because of human problems. Many CEO's spend most of their time "putting out fires." Jack Welch (2001) concludes that leadership is 75 percent about people, and 25 percent about everything else. Yet, the most common weakness among leaders and managers is their inability to work with people.

At every level of organization and government, we also see leaders who create problems and start fires because of their wrong policies or poor planning. Such problems are more likely to happen, when leaders surround themselves only with people who are subservient.

The human and financial costs of poor leadership are staggering beyond imagination. Just look at your own organization and ask: How many people are suffering at the hands of incompetent, unethical and abusive leaders? How many workers are burnt-out or disengaged? What is the total cost of toxic emotions at the work place (Frost, 2003)? How much financial and human resources are being squandered due to mismanagement?

We are facing a leadership crisis, which will only deepen unless some fundamental change is made. There is an urgent need to do some soul searching and hard thinking regarding how to best train leadership for the next generation.

A consensus is emerging among management educators that the “hard” skills of information technology and management science are not enough. We need some kind of “soft” skills so that leaders and managers know how to work with people and manage change. But experts disagree on how to teach these skills. This paper will explore two related new approaches to management: Positive psychology and servant leadership.

The positive psychology of management

The positive psychology of management provides a new direction by capitalizing on human strengths, positive emotions and a meaningful workplace (Crabtree, 2004 a, b; Rath, 2007; Wong, 2006; Wong & Gupta, 2004). There are many reasons for the importance of positive management.

First, the most valuable resource is human capital in a knowledgeable economy. Financial compensation is no longer a sufficient incentive; it takes a positive workplace to recruit and retain the most talented workers (Wong, 2002b; Wong & Gupta, 2004).

Second, in order to unleash human potential, corporate leaders need to know how to manage emotional economy (Coffman, Gonzalez-Molina, & Clifton, 2002; Frost, 2003; Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004). Recent research has documented how affect and emotions influence industrial/organizational psychology (e.g., Lord, Klimoski, & Kanfer, 2002).

Third, the positive psychology of culture/climate management is primarily concerned with the social-emotional-spiritual capital. Wong’s (1998, 2004, 2005, 2006) meaning-centered approach to management and leadership provides the conceptual framework of culture/climate management. Wong emphasizes that meaning is all we need and relationship is all we have to create a positive workplace. The meaning-approach is based on Frankl’s Logotherapy (Pattakos, 2004).

Managers and leaders can learn from positive psychology’s “discoveries involving innovation, employees’ need for respect, and the search for meaning in the workplace” (Crabtree, 2004a). Lessons on best practices can be drawn from Weisbord’s (2004) in-depth case studies of strategies that increase dignity, meaning, and a sense of community. As well, Leider (1997) has provided a practical guide on how to discover one’s unique calling and a sense of purpose in achieving a full and productive working life.

The ethos of the market and profit margin naturally dominate business corporations. Paradoxically, a more humanistic vision is needed to maintain a proper balance between hard-nosed, aggressive competition and a respect for human dignity. Drucker (1995) has identified the worship of a high profit margin as one of the deadly sins in management in a time of change.

Canfield and Miller (1998) in *Heart at Work* also state that there needs to be more than just the “bottom line” to make a business successful. We need to reclaim the ethos of community and humanity to counteract the mentality of profit at any cost. We need to care for the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of employees. The best practices of positive management are consistent with an ethical and humanistic orientation (e.g., Collins & Porras, 1994; Blanchard, O’Connor, & Ballard, 1997; O’Brien, 1992; Weisbord, 2004; Wong, 2005).

The need for servant leadership

What kind of leadership is most suitable to implement a strengths-based and meaning-centered paradigm? What kind of training prepares managers to balance humanistic concerns with the bottom line?

The servant leadership (SL) approach has much to recommend. Pioneered by Greenleaf (1977) and developed by his followers (e.g., Spears, 1994; Spears & Lawrence, 2004), SL emphasizes the following characteristics:

1. Leaders have the attitude of a humble and selfless servant

2. Leaders focus on retention and development of employees
3. Leaders are responsible for creating a safe and positive work environment that fosters innovation and enhances intrinsic motivation
4. Leaders humanize the workplace when they treat subordinates as human beings, worthy of unconditional dignity and respect
5. Leaders earn trust when they place the legitimate needs of their followers above self interests
6. Leaders earn respect when they place benefits to workers and society above the bottom line
7. Leaders listen to their employees with open-mindedness
8. Leaders develop and maintain good relationships through empathy, kindness, healing and emotional intelligence
9. Leaders gain support and cooperation by valuing team-building and involving others in decision making
10. Leaders seek to achieve organizational goals by developing and unleashing the creative potential of human resources

SL represents a radical approach – it is humanistic and spiritual rather than rational and mechanistic; it puts workers rather than shareholders at the center of concentric circles; and it motivates workers primarily through creating a caring and supportive workplace rather than through individual incentive systems. It is banking on an optimistic view of employees, believing that they will respond positively to leaders who demonstrate the above ten SL characteristics.

In sum, different from the traditional trait, behavioral, situational, and contingency leadership models, SL focuses on (a) the humble and ethical use of power as a servant leader, (b) cultivating a genuine relationship between leaders and followers, and (c) creating a supportive and positive work environment. However, in terms of the actual exercise of leadership, servant leaders are free to incorporate the positive aspects of all other leadership models except command-and-control dictatorship.

An overview of servant leadership

In the last ten years, the concept of a leader as a servant has gained increasing acceptance in leadership and organizational literature (e.g., Collins, 2001; Covey, 1994; Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999; Heifetz, 1994; Russell & Stone, 2002; Senge, 1997; Spears, 1994; Wheatley, 1994).

Furthermore, a number of leading writers in business management have endorsed servant leadership; these include Peter Drucker, Peter Block, Sheila Murray Bethel, Jim Kouzes, Barry Posner, James Autry, Warren Bennis, John Maxwell, Ken Blanchard, Max DePree, Bill Pollard, John Bogle, John Carver, Joe Batten and Dennis Romig.

Within the Christian community, SL has always been the most influential leadership model. Numerous publications on Christian leadership focus on SL (Blanchard, Hodges, & Hybels, 1999; Miller, 1995; Wilkes, 1998; Graves & Addington, 2002).

The reason is self-evident. Jesus Christ practiced servant leadership, even though he possessed the highest authority. He took on the nature of a servant in order to redeem us and minister to us (Phil.2:6-8). Jesus also explicitly taught his disciples the imperative of being a servant leader:

*"Jesus called them together and said, You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and **whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**" (Mark 10:42-45, NIV)*

SL seems to offer an answer to recent concerns about corporate scandals, toxic work environment, employee-burnout and retention problems. The logic is quite compelling: any leader with the above ten SL characteristics will be committed to creating a positive work environment that releases the potentials of employees.

However, SL has its detractors. Basically, there are six common criticisms:

1. SL is too idealistic and naïve. In an individualistic consumer culture, many people will take advantage of the servant leaders' kindness as weakness (Johnson, 2001)
2. It is too unrealistic and impractical. It would not work in many situations such as military operations or prison systems (Bowie, 2000)
3. It is too restrictive, because we need all sorts of leadership qualities, such as intuition, risk-taking and courage
4. It is too closely tied to Christian spirituality, because it is impossible for people to model after Christ's humility without being redeemed and transformed by the Holy Spirit
5. It is too hypocritical – too many claim to be servant leaders but behave more like dictators
6. It is too foreign to my leadership style – I simply can't function as a leader if I adopt the SL model

In the tough and tumble business world, even the term “servant leader” sounds like an oxymoron. Many CEOs are afraid that they would be perceived as weak and indecisive, if they think and behave like a humble servant.

Most Christian leaders welcome the banner of SL, because Jesus himself is a suffering servant, but in practice they prefer authoritarian theocracy. There are many reasons for this discrepancy. First, they have the wrong theology of leadership. They believe that they alone know what God wants and what is good for the people, because they are called and appointed by God to lead. They also believe that things will fall apart, if they do not exercise strict control over their subordinates, because human beings are depraved by nature. Second, their penchant for micro-management is primarily motivated by their own sense of insecurity – they are so worried about losing grip of control and power. Finally, the main reason for their authoritarian approach is their inflated ego – they demand total obedience and threaten everyone with dismissal for insubordination.

Here is a case in point. A Christian University President told the faculty that the university's core value of servant leadership was intended for faculty and staff, not for the President, because the President often had to make tough decisions; more importantly, the university would become liberal if the President did not keep everyone in line theologically. The faculty and staff all knew that the real reason for the President's rejection of SL was that he was a tyrant who enjoyed absolute power.

In short, SL has been distorted and devalued by different people for various reasons. SL is basically paradoxical (Rinehart, 1998; Wong, 2004) – the weak shall be strong, the last shall be first, leading through serving, winning through losing, and gaining through giving away. Such upside-down-leadership cannot be understood simply through human logic or rational thinking. One needs to approach SL from humanistic, spiritual and collectivist perspectives. One needs to move beyond self interest to consider the big picture.

In order to advance SL as a viable leadership approach, we need to develop a deeper theoretical understanding and identify the best practices of SL.

A theoretical framework

McGregor (1960) postulates two theories of work motivation. Theory X views workers as basically lazy and in need to be motivated by reward and punishment. Theory Y views work as intrinsically motivating. McGregor (1967) and Ouchi (1981) propose Theory Z, which incorporates both X and Y.

Theory S, the theoretical framework of servant leadership, goes beyond Theory Z. It focuses on the vital role of leadership in work motivation. It posits that a serving, caring, and understanding leader is best able to optimize worker motivation through (a) developing workers' strengths and intrinsic motivation and (b) creating a positive workplace. SL leaders can also be characterized as Type S leaders, because they are guided by Theory S.

SL practices participative leadership (McMahon, 1976) and shares some of the characteristics of transformational leadership (Bass, 1998; Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2003). According to Bass (2000), SL is "close to the transformational components of inspiration and individualized consideration" (p. 33). SL is also similar to steward leadership (Block, 1993), because both models emphasize the need to replace self-interest with service to others as the basis for using power. Thus, Theory S incorporates various relationship-oriented leadership practices (Stogdill & Coons, 1957; Yukl, 2002).

SL is opposed to the command-and-control type of autocratic leadership. There is now a clear consensus among modern management theorists (Avolio, 1999; Bennis, 1990; Hammer & Champy, 1993; Rinzler & Ray, 1993; Senge, 1990) that autocratic leadership needs to be replaced by leadership that empowers workers. In today's environment, command-and-control leadership no longer works, because leaders must earn people's respect and trust.

Servant leaders are free to be flexible and situational (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003; Wong, 2003), because they are no longer imprisoned by their own need for power and pride. They are willing to employ different kinds of legitimate power to facilitate worker development and accomplish organizational goals (Bass, 1998; Hersey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer, 2001).

However, servant leaders can and will dismiss workers whose performance and attitude negatively affect other workers in spite of repeated intervention efforts. Jack Kahl and Tom Donelan (2004) have made a strong case that servant leaders are not "sweet" and "weak".

Page and Wong (2000) proposed a conceptual model of servant leadership with servanthood at the heart of the model. They also developed an instrument that measured both the characteristics and the process of SL. The instrument was developed purely based on a prior conceptual analysis.

Later, Wong and Page (2003) developed an opponent-process model of servant leadership and a revised Servant Leadership Profile based on empirical research. The significant contribution of the opponent-process model is that it explicitly identifies autocratic leadership as antithetic to the practice of servant leadership. In other words, it is not possible to be a servant leader, when one is motivated by power and pride.

Based on a large sample (more than one thousand subjects), Wong and Page (2003) identified seven factors in their **Servant Leadership Profile – Revised**:

- Factor 1: Empowering and developing others
- Factor 2: Power and pride (Vulnerability and humility, if scored in the reverse)
- Factor 3: Serving others
- Factor 4: Open, participatory leadership
- Factor 5: Inspiring leadership
- Factor 6: Visionary leadership
- Factor 7: Courageous leadership (Integrity and authenticity)

The **Servant Leadership Profile – Revised** has been used by more than 100 organizations and universities for research and evaluation purposes. A 360-version has also been developed and used. We continue to receive requests to use the SLP-Revised from all over the world on a regular basis. It seems that more and more people have discovered the value of this instrument.

In the last four years, we have continued to collect valid and reliable data on the Servant Leadership Profile. Our recent data seems to suggest five meaningful and stable factors:

- Factor 1: A servant's heart (humility & selflessness) – Who we are (Self-identity)
- Factor 2: Serving and developing others – Why we want to lead (Motive)
- Factor 3: Consulting and involving others – How we lead (Method)
- Factor 4: Inspiring and influencing others – What affects we have (Impact)
- Factor 5: Modeling integrity and authenticity) – How others see us (Character)

This five-factor theory of SL captures the essential aspects of servant leadership and provides a useful conceptual framework for practice and leadership training.

The advantages of servant leadership

The main advantage of SL is that it is flexible. Whether you are a charismatic intuitive leader or a down-to-earth methodological type of leader, you can always benefit from practicing servant leadership. No leader can be effective in a culturally diverse workplace by adopting only one leadership style.

Another major advantage is that it aims at curbing the widespread evil of abuse of power. The superiority of SL over autocratic leadership has been well documented (Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999; Laub, 2003; Page & Wong, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). SL prevents and reduces all kinds of problems directly related to command-and-control leadership.

Re-engineering, restructuring, downsizing, merger and hostile take-over strikes fear in the hearts of employees whose jobs are directly affected. Often leaders simply shuffle workers around as pawns on a chess board without ever considering how these changes might impact their lives and performance. Servant leaders can help navigate troubled waters and make inevitable changes less stressful for the employees.

Evidence is accumulating that servant leadership is good for business. Studies by Dennis Romig (2001) with thousands of employees have demonstrated that when the practices of servant leadership are implemented through leadership training in a business, performance has improved by 15 - 20% and work group productivity by 20 -50%. This means an increase in profitability.

Fortune magazine's annual rankings of the best 100 corporations to work for show that companies that practice SL consistently rank within the top 10 (e.g., Southwest Airlines, Synovus Financial Corporation, TD Industries, and Container Stores). Many other successful businesses, such as the Toro Company and The Men's Wearhouse, are also known for being led by servant leaders

Based on theoretical analysis, empirical research, and case studies, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that SL may indeed qualify as the best leadership style for all situations for the following reasons:

1. Being freed from egotistic concerns, such as insecurity and self-advancement, Type S leaders are able to devote their full attention to developing workers and building the organization.
2. Type S leaders have a positive view of workers as individuals who are capable of developing their full potentials and becoming leaders, if they are given a supportive and caring work environment.
3. Being concerned with individual needs and sensitive to individual differences in personality, Type S leaders are able to bring out the best in the workers.
4. Being situational leaders, Type S leaders recognize situations in which absence of their power actually facilitates self-management and productivity.
5. Being good stewards, Type S leaders will do whatever necessary and appropriate to maximize leadership effectiveness in all kinds of situations.

6. Being worker-centered and growth-oriented, Type S leaders can turn ordinary workers into future leaders by developing their strengths.
7. SL serves as an antidote to corruption and abuse in power positions.
8. SL can help reduce burnout and build an emotionally healthy organization.
9. SL focuses on cultivating the intrinsic motivation through inspiring workers to believe in their own growth and embrace the vision and purpose of the organization.
10. SL seems most suitable for the next generation of workers, who are very cynical of authority and demand authenticity from their bosses.
11. SL seems most suitable for knowledge workers, who value independence and creativity.
12. SL recognizes that leadership is a group process, which should not be centralized in one or two individuals. Therefore, SL is based on team-building.
13. SL is deeply rooted in humane, spiritual and ethical values.
14. SL represents the most effective and comprehensive approach to human resources management and development.

The best practices in servant leadership

SL is deceptively simple, yet it is probably the most profound and difficult type of leadership. The main reason for the difficulty is that it is not based on a set of skills – it requires a fundamental change of attitude and some kind of inner transformation.

All the exercises in team-building will not make you a team person, if you are an egotistic person at heart. Egos die hard. Pride will not easily let go of its prisoners. That is why there are so few servant leaders. SL training challenges our basic attitudes and motivations. It demands a new orientation towards the self and people.

The following represents a preliminary set of best practices that may help cultivate the five major characteristics of SL. This is primarily a summary of what others have proposed (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003; Maxwell, 2005; Spears & Lawrence, 2004). The important thing emphasized here is that these best practices must be aligned with each other in order to realize the full benefits of SL.

1. Right identity – Seeing oneself as a servant

- Cultivating humility – Willing to be the last and the least (this is something Christ has emphasized over and over again. Yet, most people are having a tough time playing the second fiddle).
- Cultivating selflessness – Not I, but Christ; Not about me, but about the organization; not about my position and power, but about the people (ego is often in the way of effective leadership).
- Cultivating stewardship – I am accountable to God and to the people for what I do
- Cultivating a sense of “calling” – I am defined not by my position or role, but by God’s calling and commissioning.

It may appear to just be an issue of semantics of whether we refer to individuals as leaders who serve, or servants who lead. However, we believe that it is important for our primary self-perception as servants, who are called to lead in some areas. Apostle Paul always refers to him as a servant. Such a perspective is the necessary bedrock upon which to build our leadership.

2. Right motivation – Serving God by serving others

- The practice of extending a helping hand (our habitual attitude is not what I can get from you, but how I can be of help to you).
- The practice of sacrificing self interest for others (there is always the preparedness to sacrifice one’s own self interest for God or for the common good. This is against the human nature of selfishness, but consistent with Christ’s nature of self-denial).
- The practice of bringing out the best in others (one can either bring out the worst in others, or bring out the best. To do the latter, we need to know other people’s needs and strengths).

- The practice of empowering others for their development (“If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want ten years of prosperity, grow trees. If you want one hundred years of prosperity, grow people.” - *Chinese Proverb*).

3. Right method – Relating to others in a positive manner

- Listening to others with openness and empathy (most leaders, especially preachers, like to do the talking rather than listening. Learning how to listen is the most important skill for servant leaders. Listening is essential for the development of understanding and sensitivity. Kouzes and Posner [1987, p.180] declare: “Sensitivity to others is a prerequisite for success in Leadership.”).
- Involving others in decision-making (this does not mean that servant leaders depend on committee decisions or consensus. At times, servant leaders have to make tough and unpopular decisions, but servant leaders must consult widely and incorporate people’s input into major decisions).
- Engaging others in team-building and community building (there are many team-building activities, but these exercises will not amount to very much unless the leader has a servant’s heart).
- Affirm others by expressing the confidence you have in them (there is a Chinese saying: Don’t hire anyone you cannot trust, but don’t question anyone whom you trust enough to hire. Whenever possible, validate others and show appreciation for their good work. Many leaders only know how to criticize and they don’t even know how to say “Thank you.”).

4. Right impact – Inspiring others to serve a higher purpose

- Modeling the core values on a daily basis (Kouzes and Posner, 1987).
- Demonstrating love in action (making compassionate acts a regular routing of life so that others learn how to express love and kindness to one another).
- Challenging others to live for a higher purpose (constantly demonstrating the importance of looking at the large picture and a long-range vision. Teach people not to be too petty and too preoccupied with short-term gains).
- Challenging others to strive for excellence (be a life-long learner and an eager student at all times. Teach others the need for constant self-development).

5. Right character – Maintaining integrity and authenticity

- Walking the talk regardless of the costs
- Daring to stand up for what one believes in
- Having the courage to confront grim realities
- Engage in honest examination and assessment of one’s progress in life’s journey (openness to honest feedback and correction is critical to the Servant-Leader. This requires seeking out those rare, yet honest individuals in one’s life to speak a corrective truth and points out one’s blind spots).

These are essential practices for a Servant-Leader to be effective. These are the qualities/practices people desire to see in their leaders. “Leadership is in the eye of the follower.” (Kouzes and Posner, 1987, p.15).

Servant-leadership contributes to leadership development

Servanthood by itself does not make one a leader. One needs to blend a servant’s heart with leadership skills. After an extensive review of the literature on what makes a great leader, Wong (2007) has identified twelve defining characteristics of exceptional leaders:

1. Great capacity for productive work – They seem to possess boundless energy and thrive under stress. They are able to work indefatigably for years on end in order to accomplish an important project. Their stamina and tenacity give them a decided advantage. They manage to work with great

enthusiasm even when they cannot get into a state of “flow”. Their consistent productivity is based on their deeply ingrained habits of commitment and discipline.

2. Great vision for the right direction – They can see things clearer and farther than others. They have insight into just what is needed and the foresight to see what will succeed in the long run. They can feel the pulse of the world which they inhabit and anticipate the world which is not yet born. Time and time again, they prove that they have the right answer, even when conventional wisdom and tradition dictate otherwise. Their vision is neither a grand illusion, nor abstract ideal. Rather, it is a living document that inspires, unites and energizes others.

3. Great intellect and knowledge – They are intelligent, knowledgeable and competent not only in their specialty, but also in the general area of humanities, social sciences and business administration. They have a good grasp of complex issues and the ability to get to the crux of the matter. They have the genius of holding two opposing views and the wisdom to navigate cross-currents.

4. Great people skills – They work well with all kinds of people from different cultures, because they have a deep understanding of human nature and basic human needs that transcend cultures. They see both the bright and dark side of people, without losing faith in the human potential for positive change. They don't judge others on the basis of beliefs, values or other cultural characteristics, because they respect the basic human dignity of all people. Understanding and flexibility characterize their leadership style. They know how to resolve conflicts and foster harmony. They know that different folks need different strokes, and they apply different management skills to handle different situations.

5. Great team-builders – They do not surround themselves with people who are subservient and loyal only to them, but select competent and creative people who are faithful to the same vision and mission. They welcome diverse opinions and value people who are smarter than they are in various areas of expertise. They know how to put together and manage an A-team to insure organizational success.

6. Great motivators – They create a supportive and meaningful work environment and make people feel that they matter to the organization. They generate intrinsic motivation by involving people in the excitement of doing something significant and purposeful. They capitalize on people's strengths and know how to unleash these inner energies. They see the potential in every person and want to bring out the best in them. They empower workers to develop their potential to become great workers and leaders. They set challenging but realistic goals. By setting an example of excellence in everything they do, they make it the standard for all aspects of their operations.

7. Great heart – Their heart is big enough to embrace the entire organization and the whole world. They are neither partisan nor petty. They reach out to those who do not agree with them. They do not mind being proven wrong or outshone by others; their main concern is for the common good. They don't hold grudges; they are always ready to forgive and apologize. Their capacity for compassion is equivalent to their understanding.

8. Great communicators – They can articulate a vision and tell compelling stories to rally people around a common goal. They know how to inform as well as inspire. Above all, they are good listeners. They understand people's needs and feelings by talking to them on a personal level. Their ability to resonate with others is based not so much on communication skills as on their deeply felt sense of connectedness with the organization and humanity.

9. Great optimists – They stay optimistic even when circumstances are bleak. Their optimism stems from personal faith more than anything else – faith that good will prevail over evil and persistence will eventually lead to success. They know how to inspire hope through difficult times, while battling their own inner doubts. Their proven capacity to endure and overcome inspires others to be optimistic about the unknown.

10. Great courage – They have the courage to confront their worst fears and risk everything in order to remain true to their own convictions and other people’s trust. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the ability to persist and act in the presence of fear. They know how to live with the continued tension between despair and hope, doubts and confidence, and fear and courage. They grow stronger as a result of this constant opposition.

11. Great self-knowledge – They know who they are and what they stand for. They know that their strengths contain the seeds of destruction (e.g., over-confidence). They also accept their own weaknesses and limitations as the essential conditions of being human. They are willing to accept negative feedback in order to improve themselves. They would not let their ego get in the way of doing what is good for the organization. Feeling comfortable in their own skin reduces their defensiveness. Their humility comes from their emotional maturity and self-knowledge.

12. Great character – Above all, they possess integrity and authenticity. They have the moral courage to stand up for their beliefs and do what is right, no matter how much it will cost them. To them, integrity is more important than success. Their leadership is principle-centered and purpose-driven, regardless of the pressure to make expedient. They are transparent and genuine; they say what they mean and they walk the talk. They accept responsibility for their choices and would not blame others for their own mistakes. They do not steal credit from others. One of their greatest assets is their “reputational capital”. Others can always bank on their trustworthiness, because they serve as symbols of moral fortitude.

It is self-evident that the best practices of SL listed earlier will contribute the development of all the important leadership characteristics, especially in matters related to the heart and character of leadership. In fact, servant leaders are more likely to attain Level 5 Leadership (Collins, 2001), which is characterized by personal humility and a fierce dedication to a larger cause.

Conclusions

It is high time to develop a new paradigm of leadership training. All the exercises on team-building and strength-finding will not work without the right kind of leadership. The spirit of the leader as a servant may be just what is needed to implement a strengths-based paradigm.

“The Leader of the Future” from the Drucker Foundation, edited by Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith and Richard Beckhard (1997), rejected the command-and-control approach; they advocated the importance of learning from the grass roots and leading with a shared vision and a spirit of collaboration. They believed that the challenge facing future leaders is to serve as role models with core values and inspire a diverse work group for long-term common good. In “The Leaders of the Future II”, Hesselblein and Goldsmith (2006) reinforce the same themes and emphasize the need for new ideas for leadership training in the post-9/11 world.

McCrimmon (2006) advocates a new kind of leadership to create the future. Such new leadership is not tied to official positions or roles; rather, it is an informal act which can be performed by all employees. Thus, every worker can show leadership by suggesting new products, better services and more efficient processes. Toyota and Sony are shining examples of this type of bottom-up leadership.

SL is not new, because it was practiced and taught by Jesus more than 2000 years ago, but it is new and revolutionary in today’s competitive consumer society. Potentially, SL can transform leadership, the workplace and society. Just pause and think what will happen to your organization when CEOs and managers really practice SL as characterized by the following:

- It is about influence rather than power and control
- It is about inspiration rather than position and title

- It is about character and caring rather than skills
- It is about creating a climate of love rather than a culture of fear
- It is about focusing on others' strengths rather than weaknesses
- It is about listening rather than giving orders
- It is about serving rather than lording it over others
- It is about humility rather than pride
- It is about long-range benefits rather than short-term profits
- It is about the big picture rather than petty self interest
- It is about global vision rather than territorial instinct
- It is about creating new futures rather than maintaining the status quo

The world is full of leaders with huge egos and a great deal of leadership abilities. These leaders may do more harm than good, if they are primarily motivated by selfish ambitions.

What we need most are servant leaders with exceptional abilities blended with hearts full of humility and love. Such leaders can make this world a better place and restore people's hope in the future.

We have presented both the theoretical basis and best practices of SL. We hope that this paper will contribute to the development of a curriculum for SL training in both MBA and Leadership programs.

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Being a servant leader can boost engagement, increase trust and build better team relationships. Includes 10 key characteristics of servant leadership. Remember that servant leadership is about focusing on other people's needs – not their feelings. Don't avoid making unpopular decisions or giving team members negative feedback when this is needed. Also, do not rely on it exclusively – use it alongside styles like Transformational Leadership, where you develop an inspiring vision of the future, motivate people to deliver this, manage its implementation, and build an ever-stronger team. How to Become a Servant Leader. Servant leadership sounds like a contradiction, but it's really a profound leadership approach – an approach that no leader can afford to ignore. Servant leader. That sounds pretty much like a contradiction in terms, but it is a profoundly important idea. Indeed, I'd argue that servant leadership the single most valuable approach to leadership. And it's an approach that no leader can afford to ignore. Creating Processes and Practices: A Pragmatic Leader. As the social tensions finish playing out, you'll start to notice the team becoming more effective. You'll also see people becoming far more confident in their individual roles. At this point, you won't serve them well by interfering too much, and they don't need you to offer much by way of instruction.