

A Personal Leadership Development Plan

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Leadership and Organizational Behavior

Leadership Development Plan

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My Leadership and Organizational Philosophy

General Omar Bradley, generally acknowledged as one of the U. S. Army's finest leaders, summed up his philosophy of leadership: "The test of a leader lies in the reaction and response of his followers. He should not have to impose authority. Bossiness in itself never made a leader. He must make his influence felt by example and the instilling of confidence in his followers. The greatness of a leader is measured by the achievements of the led."

(Bradley, O. N., 1971) General Bradley's eloquent statement has framed the development of my basic definition of leadership: a leader uses knowledge, skills and relationships to motivate, encourage, and mentor others in the achievement of common goals.

My leadership philosophy is based upon my collective life experiences, observations, successes, and failures. I view leadership as a journey taken together by leaders and followers to a common destination. Great leaders establish a plan, a map to help them organize and ensure they have an appropriate and effective team in place, clearly communicate the plan to and lead their followers to the destination. Effective leaders define and refine their missions and consistently and they continuously communicate with followers the objectives and milestones required to achieve success, for it is essential for a team to not only to understand where the organization is and where it needs to go, but also how it will get there. It is not sufficient for a leader to merely determine a destination and the route upon which the group will travel; he must also enable others to follow by according with respect and providing training and education, resources, encouragement, and guidance as required. To lead the mission to a fruitful conclusion, a leader must establish priorities and utilize the talents, creativity, resources, and energy of his followers, generally imperfect individuals, and empower them to rise to and occasionally beyond their previously assumed potential. A successful leader helps his followers

find the best in themselves, because that is the lasting measurement of leadership success.

(Maxwell, J. C., 2007) Only by empowering followers can a leader advance his progress. An effective leader does not allow faulty systems, poor choices, bad luck, excuses, disruptions, or temporary failures to impede the organization's travel to the destination. Obstacles may require detours, but a leader finds ways to continue in spite of the challenges encountered, and he finds a way to bring his followers with him.

In the current business environment of rapid development and improvements, particularly in technology and systems, successful leaders must be flexible as they adapt to the tremendous changes encountered in a highly complex world. (Johns, H. E & Moser, H. R., 1989, p. 120) When successes are realized, a great leader will not take credit for the achievement, but instead will recognize the individual contributions and accomplishments of his followers and express gratitude to them. And great leaders exhibit behaviors that are consistent with the behaviors they seek from followers. "Leaders do what they require of others." (Johns & Moser, 1989, p. 120)

Because I am an independent human resources consultant, my approach to leadership is necessarily based on collaboration and consultation. I engage subcontracted consultants with selected skill sets as may be required to fulfill my commitments to my clients. When working with a client to lead their organization to a more effective human resources environment, complex partnering tasks, including intensive and complex information gathering and communication, is frequently required. As the leader of any group or a project team, I am ultimately responsible for everything under my authority. At the same time, to function as an effective resource for my clients, I must actively consider and pursue the input of clients and client stakeholders in offering solutions. In order to succeed in and further develop my business,

I must help followers to develop their own skills, and empower them to control everything under their authority.

My Core Personal Values

All leaders, all human beings, have values. Values are beliefs that represent an individual's ideas about what is right, good, or desirable. (Robbins, S. P. & Judge,

T. A., 2011, p. 144) My personal and leadership values are essentially aligned and I try to use them as a guideline in everything I do and everything I say in my work, in my associations, and in my family. By having one defined set of values, I am able to pursue a life of purpose and accomplishment. My core personal and leadership values include:

- Integrity and trustworthiness
- Competency, responsibility, and accountability
- Respect, appreciation, and advocacy for others
- Community contribution and involvement
- Expansive gratitude; expressed appreciation for large things and for small things

In her book *Jesus, CEO*, Laurie Beth Jones defines three essential aspects of leadership derived from studying the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Leadership traits demonstrated during Jesus' lifetime are identified and loosely grouped into three categories. According to Jones, Jesus' life and mission are demonstrative of successful leadership because he consistently demonstrated:

- The strength of self-mastery
- The strength of action
- The strength of relationships

Strength of self-mastery is developed through identifying and living a life based on core ethical principles, and by establishing and focusing on priorities. Listening to and treating others

with respect and using integrity to inform thoughts and actions demonstrate strength of self-mastery. **Strength of action** is developed through identifying the essential tools, resources, partners, and followers necessary to complete the mission. Personal and professional competency, responsibility, accountability, and continual professional development demonstrate strength of action. Advocacy on behalf of others and community involvement demonstrate strength of action. **Strength of relationships** is developed by respecting others, finding value in their individual contributions, working in teams and groups to accomplish common goals, and supporting and assisting friends and associates to achieve their individual objectives. Expressing gratitude to others and participating and serving in the community demonstrate of strength of relationships. (Jones, L. B., 1995)

I try to live in accordance with my personal values in everything I do, everything I say, and everything that I am each day. My values are carried with me and shade my interactions with family, with friends, with colleagues, with clients, with subordinates, and within my community. Because these values represent my personal beliefs, they are multi-situational and can be applied to all my actions and activities. I am imperfect and will occasionally veer off the course I have established based upon my values. When I find myself astray, I revisit and reflect upon these values, and I work to find a return to the path and refocus on the objectives and the mission. I recognize that leaders don't let problems become a problem. (Maxwell, 2007) I rarely allow failures to diminish my sense of self-worth or self-respect. Similarly, when followers encounter setbacks, I must not allow these failures to diminish my respect for them or my recognition of their unique value. I have little interest in finding fault or assigning blame for small failures, whether personal or organizational, to others because it is neither productive nor useful. Instead I focus on corrective actions that enable the continuation of the journey.

In my prior corporate career, I worked for an individual who on one occasion when presented with a final project, looked it over and made a startling comment. He very explicitly told me that if the project was poorly received by his leaders or the organization's board, it was my fault. When I asked if he would actually throw me under the bus, his verbatim reply was: "If it's me or it's you, it's you." As a result of this sub-optimal experience, I know that supporting my followers is a critical leadership trait. A leader who fails to do so cannot realistically expect maximum efforts or results of his followers.

As the leader, I am accountable to bring the team to success along with me; *their failures are my failures*. The questions I should in those circumstances are: what went wrong? How do we fix this and get back on course? How can we avoid recurring or similar errors in the future? In asking these questions, it is imperative that I seek input from diverse sources, listen when others speak, and remember that not all communication is expressed verbally or in writing. (Robbins, & Judge, 2011) In gaining understanding I must probe for and accept answers and realities, and work to keep achievement of the objective the focus. When my partners or team or I achieve success, I express gratitude to those who have contributed to my success.

My Personal Leadership Plan

In learning about leadership theories and research, I have found that there are many similarities and replications of ideas offered by an army of experts and consultants too large to enumerate. I believe that leadership expertise is not developed rapidly, but that instead it is a daily process. The sum of my education and experiences, enhanced by my perspective and observations, comprise the foundation upon which I will develop as a leader. In this plan, I have focused on those aspects of leadership that I believe most require development to enable my

success, as well as those which will be important in future career changes. I have established a starting point to guide me through the development process. I expect this plan will be changed and altered as required by life and circumstances. It is essential, however, to begin. By beginning my journey I can further strengthen my characteristics of strength of action.

Skills leading to strength of self-mastery will be developed through a process of planning my business, personal, community, and family interactions and activities in accordance with the values of trustworthiness and integrity. Because I respect others and want to earn and maintain their respect and trust, it is essential that I am what and who I say I am. To the best of my ability, I will develop a life strengthened by integrity.

In this process, it is necessary to define and understand integrity. The word integrity is defined as “adherence to moral and ethical principles,” “the soundness of moral character,” and “the state of being whole, entire, or undiminished.” (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2011) My personal concept of integrity, however, is derived from the origin of the word, from the Latin adjective “integer,” which means whole or complete. When used in this leadership development plan, the meaning of integrity will be guided by the definition that integrity is a state of being whole. Only by living my life in keeping with my values and based upon applying principles of integrity in thought and action can I expect to become and remain a whole person. This means that I cannot apply one set of principles to myself and expect others to exhibit higher principles. I cannot apply one set of standards to my clients and teammates and a different set to myself. While the differing needs of clients require tailored solutions and outcomes, I cannot formulate my consulting advice and services by applying one set of standards of integrity to one client and a different set of standards to another. The key to earning and maintaining the respect and trust of others, including clients and followers, is to live a life guided

by principles of high integrity in everything I do. This enables me to improve strength of self-mastery by becoming everything that I say that I am or wish to become.

The effective use of personal power, including expert and referent power based upon admiration and respect, are “soft skills” important in consulting. The ability to use this power is also important in leadership, because the use of the tactics of persuasion, negotiation, collaboration, and influence lead to more satisfying and effective outcomes. A fuller development of my skill in the use of these tactics will lead to my increased leadership success. (Robbins & Judge, 2011) Sinclair contends that successful leadership contains seductive elements, including sweeping followers off their feet, and that by accepting this premise, important leadership characteristics can be realized. Drawing on and citing the leadership theories and studies of past scholars including Barnard, McGregor, Mintzberg, and Peters and Waterman to support her position, she asserts that leaders, particularly those who are charismatic, often rely on seduction to persuade and influence followers. (Sinclair, A., 2009) Rather than relying on seduction to increase the effectiveness of my personal power, I prefer to rely on a foundation established and maintained within a culture of trust. Robbins & Judge note trust is essential, as personal power is available only after trust has been established in a relationship. (2011) To further develop my ability to use personal power tactics, I will apply the knowledge I have gained in Leadership and Organizational Behavior in my interactions with clients. I will also seek to hone my basic negotiation and mediation skills by identifying advanced educational resources available through my professional affiliations and associations and within my community. My research has provided information about educational programs offered through the Grand Teton Mediation Association in my community. In recognition of the leadership value of personal power skills, I have also agreed to provide volunteer mediation

services in my county's courts on a regular bi-weekly basis. This will provide service to my neighbors and my community and will also develop and refine my mediating, negotiating, and persuasion skills.

I will actively seek opportunities to mentor others, particularly those beginning their careers, in an effort to develop my soft skills and help them formulate, advance, and achieve their goals. In this, I will seek to mentor by explaining, demonstrating, providing examples, and offering practical opportunities to gain experience, remembering the philosophy generally believed to have originated with Confucius: "I see and I forget. I hear and I remember. I do and I understand." (Lau, D. C., trans. 1979)

I will develop strength of action by being and remaining personally and professionally competent, responsible, and accountable in my actions. I know that while it is important for an independent consultant to appear fully capable at all times, it is equally important to ensure complete understanding of individual circumstances and desired outcomes, and to generate a number of potential solutions by listening to other people. I must utilize increased knowledge of softer skills in order to avoid the flaw of being overly certain, an occasional by-product of trying to appear competent in many areas.

"A good leader encourages followers to tell him what he needs to know, not what he wants to hear." (Maxwell, 2007, p. 211) I will actively listen with purpose and engagement to understand rather, not merely hearing others, when they tell me what I need to know. I will remember that attention to non-verbal communication is an important component in understanding.

Competency, responsibility, and accountability require not only that I make responsible choices and decisions, but also that I demonstrate strength of action by doing what I commit to do. In interacting with clients and others, I must make only those commitments that I am able to fulfill. This will be a challenge for me; it is very difficult for an independent consultant to decline any revenue producing opportunity, and I am much more apt to automatically make a commitment and then figure out how to fulfill it. I recognize that over the long term this is irresponsible professional behavior that may become detrimental to my business. Before making a commitment, I will develop a plan for each client and each project based upon a review of my skills, my available resources, and my time commitments in order to ensure I can competently meet my clients' needs. I will also apply this action in private relationships since my private life is highly integrated with my professional life.

Putting plans, objectives, milestones, and expected outcomes in writing prior to presentation to clients is my established practice, but I will also develop and schedule weekly review processes for each client and every current project. I will complete these reviews, make alterations to projects and schedules as required, and communicate the status honestly and thoroughly to clients, to subordinates, and to others involved in and contributing to projects. This additional process and communication format will allow me to modify and alter project plans as required, without unnecessarily jeopardizing the success of the project.

In leading others, I must clearly communicate that excellent intentions are insufficient unless they are accompanied by effective action. The best method of communicating this to others is through personal example. For me and for those I lead, there can be no substitute for effective follow-through. Activity is not accomplishment. (Maxwell, 2007) In leading, I am responsible for the failures of my team. I must be competent and accountable in leading them

through and beyond those failures. An important leadership characteristic is finding a way for the team to win. (Maxwell, 2007) I will demonstrate strength of action by accepting setbacks while still finding a way to proceed toward the objective and fulfill the mission.

As a leader I must respect and demonstrate my respect for those I lead, those with whom I interact, and those I simply encounter in the course of living. In 2000, I began working for an admired and successful leader. As I observed his processes, methods, and activities, I realized that the words “please” and “thank you” were some of his most frequently spoken words. He thanked the building custodians for the small courtesy of holding an elevator door for him. He thanked the security guards for their service. He sent a card to Muhammad, the newsstand vendor from whom he purchased his daily newspapers, when he discovered that his wife had suffered a medical emergency and was hospitalized. The card expressed his concern for Muhammad’s wife, his regret for the disruption that had occurred in their daily relationship, his recognition for and appreciation of the services Muhammad customarily provided to him. I later learned that this leader and his wife, bearing flowers, had found an occasion to visit Muhammad’s wife in the hospital, express their respect for him, and mention how important he was to the success of the leader’s day. In fact, although they had previously not met her, they visited on two separate occasions over the six week period during which she was hospitalized. When I asked, he told me that Muhammad was a significant positive contributor to his daily routine, that it had only taken them a little over an hour to visit her because it wasn’t very far out of their way, and that Muhammad’s wife was deeply appreciative of the visit and seemed greatly cheered when they departed. He sent small tokens of thanks to seemingly unimportant individuals, such as Muhammad, almost every day. He listened when people, whether powerful or weak, spoke to him, frequently regarding issues unrelated to business, and went out of his way

to help them with their problems. His life was a demonstration of the complete respect he felt for everyone he encountered.

Needless to say Muhammad, and others too numerous to count, would have walked through fire to follow this leader. After observing him in action I realized that I also would follow this leader where he led. Because he had earned and worked to maintain respect, an essential component in personal power, he was highly effective in influencing and persuading his followers. (Robbins & Judge, 2011, p. 443) My willingness to follow was based upon my respect for him, which originated in actions demonstrating his strength in relationships. This was a powerful lesson, and I have tried to emulate his behavior and actions in demonstrating my respect for others. The insight that I gained from simply observing his leadership skill was lasting and powerful.

An additional result of my observation of him was the expansion of my definition of a relationship. I have a relationship with everybody I encounter every day. My interactions with everyone I meet provide an opportunity to further develop my strength of relationships. This applies to all of my interactions, regardless of brevity or non-recurrence. I will work to earn the trust and respect of others, recognizing that it is a requirement of personal power.

My community, in common with every community and group, requires the collective contributions of its members in order to thrive. I have found that contributions to and involvement in my community benefit me in ways I could not anticipate. Through community involvement, I have gained information and education, friendships and associations, and the knowledge that I have positively impacted lives through my contributions. This is essential in my life, but it has also become an important driver of my business achievements. By lending my

expertise in a community employment program, I have made invaluable business contacts. Last year my community involvement and those resulting networking contacts facilitated approximately 25 percent of my total business revenue. In contributing to my community I have reaped multiples of what I have contributed. Community contribution and involvement are important components of my business and my success, and demonstrate strength of action and strength of relationships. U.S. President Calvin Coolidge spoke of the merits of service to others: “No person was ever honored for what he received. Honor has been the reward for what he gave.” (Pietrusza, D., 2008, p 129) I will seek to obtain more leadership roles in community forums in order to develop leadership ability.

In their research on women in leadership, Dahlvig and Longman theorize that an individual’s life defining moments, typically pivotal moments or “crucible” events that represent intense transformational experiences that shape the development of an individual, also connect a leader’s core values and leadership effectiveness. (2010, p. 243) In addition to developing my own leadership capabilities, I seek to be helpful to others and to be a contributor to their crucible events. Service in my community employment program, and taking advantage of everyday opportunities to encourage others, will allow me to use and hone my experience and skills while helping others overcome their obstacles. Dahlvig and Longman, describing the effect of random acts in the development of leaders, indicate that particularly when these small acts occur early in a career, they may have dramatic impacts on the development of their leadership. They specifically identified three experiences that most impact the leadership development of women: the encouragement of an influential person, often a role model or professional contact; an event that leads to the reframing of a previous understanding about leadership, including the recognition of a sense of responsibility toward siblings developed through caring for those

entrusted to her; and a situation in which women began to view themselves as leaders and stood up for something greater than themselves, often related to concerns about a cause or a perceived injustice. (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010, p. 246) These defining moments may seem small when they occur, but can have a powerful impact on the leadership development process. I have been the beneficiary of these small events and observations, as indicated by specific examples.

Encouragement and assistance to others is both a goal and a byproduct of my community service in this program and will facilitate the continued development my leadership abilities. I can also benefit and develop my leadership skill by taking greater advantage of my observations to increase the power of my random experiences while I actively encourage others and help them fulfill their potential, an essential leadership responsibility identified by Maxwell (2007) and others.

Expansive gratitude and the expression of gratitude, is an underrated value. Using the words “thank you” and “please” increases the motivation of followers. Frequently expressing gratitude takes little effort, but is highly meaningful to those on the receiving end. I routinely glance behind me at doorways, and if others are behind me I hold the door for them. I am consistently surprised when people take advantage of this small act of courtesy and proceed through the door I am holding without acknowledging my action. I am not their doorman, but if I were, I would appreciate the respect for others conveyed through even a perfunctory expression of gratitude. Consequentially, I endeavor to always clearly express my gratitude to those who help me, serve me, or enable me. I believe these expressions of gratitude reap many small benefits for me and for my business. I know that people appreciate my gratitude because not infrequently they will thank me for sending a note thanking them. This demonstrates the power of small things and small courtesies. The expression of gratitude is one of my core values

because has powerful impact. I can develop the strength of relationships by ensuring that I observe and identify small things, and appropriately express gratitude for them. Leaders who cannot recognize and acknowledge the contributions of followers and reward them effectively will not be successful. Maxwell writes that effective leaders are those who recognize and reward the contributions of others. (Maxwell, 2007) A leader's simple expression of gratitude is never inappropriate.

Conclusion

There is no single "best way" to lead, and there is substantial repetitive advice offered by vast armies of leadership consultants. In the end, however, each leader must develop his or her own style, based upon values, experiences, and mission to formulate leadership skills that build on the foundation of his or her existing strengths. What skills should a leader concentrate on developing? In an article enumerating the common leadership traits that create loyal employees, Meghan Biro named:

- Telling the truth
- Clearly communicating roles and responsibilities
- Creating a workplace culture that values real people relationships
- Being fair and open
- Modeling the behaviors you seek in others

Biro emphasizes that: "Each of us possesses skills, strengths, talents, and flaws. Each of us seeks to belong, to be engaged, to relate to those around us. Loyalty is built on relationships, shared goals and fair treatment. Don't take loyalty and engagement for granted – create a remarkable culture where there are possible and rewarding outcomes of the workplace." (Biro, 2012)

Jones (1995) analyzed the life, mission, and impact of Jesus Christ and derived dozens of examples of his leadership. She also illustrated the lasting impact of his examples using contemporary real-world examples.

D. G. Javitch noted that whether they were born with skills or developed their skills, great leaders share ten traits:

- Mission
- Vision
- Goal
- Competency
- Strong team members
- Interpersonal skills
- Communication skills
- Can-do get-it-done attitude
- Inspiration
- Ambition

In his list (2009), Dr. Javitch provides a practical additional resource for identifying significant gaps in creating a plan for leadership development. I will continue to assess and re-assess my strengths to identify those characteristics and skills in which I require further development, find the resources to enable me in the process, and continue to work to develop my leadership capability.

I believe that it is essential to learn and derive meaning from small leadership lessons, both observed and experienced. Unlikely leaders frequently emerge when tested by fire, and leaders frequently emerge in unlikely situations. On December 2, 2012, while I was establishing and reviewing priorities for the upcoming week and waiting for the beginning of the scheduled National Football League game between the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Baltimore Ravens, I overheard an insightful comment, voiced by a CBS Sports analyst about a player's essential

leadership traits. The previous game between the Detroit Lions and the Indianapolis Colts was nearly over. The Colts were facing a 5 point deficit with no time-outs available to them and less than 90 seconds left in the game. The analyst observed that it is unwise to ever count Colts Quarterback Andrew Luck out of a game, unless the game was over. As an NFL fan, I know that Andrew Luck was the top draft pick in the 2012 NFL draft. I know that he is expected to eventually emerge as one of the NFL's great quarterbacks and leaders. I also know that to that point in his rookie season he has led his mediocre team to a number of late scoring comeback victories, and a better than expected record of 7 wins and 4 losses.

I began paying attention to the game and watched as Luck engineered and led his team on one last scoring drive. With less than 30 seconds left to play and a first down on the Lions' ten yard line, Luck attempted three consecutive incomplete passes, and in the process ran the game clock down to 4 seconds. With a fourth down opportunity on the apparently final play of the game, Luck again threw a pass, this time for a completion, a game winning touchdown, and a seemingly unlikely victory for the Colts.

At that point, the analyst observed that what separates Andrew Luck from other NFL rookies is that "he finds a way to get it done." How does a rookie quarterback exhibit such leadership skills this early in his career when veteran quarterbacks struggle in similar situations?

Andrew Luck is, I believe, an example of an amalgam product. He is someone who uses his assets (athletic ability, intelligence, teammates, coaching, focus, determination), and adds the value derived from his relatively short life and minimal professional experiences, his education, his coaching, his training, and his knowledge of his teammates and their individual capabilities to enable him to put his plan in action and achieve his goals. Andrew Luck seems to be evidence

that leadership capability is a complex end result, developed over time. Luck has seized his opportunities to gain leadership skills by observing, analyzing, learning, and staying focused on his objectives. He also demonstrates the value of translating small things, small experiences, and small observations into larger than expected successes. In doing this he has found ways to achieve many unlikely successes and in the process has brought his team with him. In short, he has found a way to get it done. He has become, in the few short months of his rookie season, the leader of the team. His odds of achieving success in professional football were always pretty good; he was expected, in time, to become an effective team leader. Maybe he was in fact born with some degree of unique leadership insight or has received exceptional leadership coaching. His emergence as a successful leader was expected to take time. Maxwell observed that leadership development is a daily process that is demonstrated in small incremental gains. (2007) But Andrew Luck seems to have identified ways to accelerate the process of his leadership development.

I have a lifetime over which to develop my leadership. The key immediate actions required are a more thorough assessment of where I currently am, designing the precise roadmap, and getting started. It will be a process of small, continually progressive gains. I will use all of my available resources, including the observation of small things and my current educational process to gain insight into how the leadership process works. This when added to my continued effort, will produce a continued, continual, and cumulative leadership development result, and allow me to lead more effectively.

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