



Delta Gamma Well Aware

Encompasses eight dimensions: Social, Spiritual, Physical, Emotional, Vocational, Intellectual, Financial and Leadership Development

Discovering Your Leadership Behaviors

Increasingly the topic of leadership surfaces whether analyzing your supervisor or colleagues, son/daughter's teacher, friends, or politicians. Book stores provide a vast selection of leadership literature, each offering a framework or theory aimed to make us better leaders. Unfortunately, what we often fail to do is first look inward and critically examine ourselves. Susan Komives, Nance Lucas, and Timonthy McMachon (1998), three higher education leadership theorists, write "Self-awareness is central to being able to understand others and interact effectively in groups, organizations, and communities." Therefore, instead of first critiquing others behaviors, these University of Maryland theorists urge us to first look inward before focusing outward.

James Kouzes and Barry Posner (2002) echo this sentiment in *The Leadership Challenge* providing a framework to examine our own leadership behaviors. Kouzes and Posner began their research in search of how leaders get others to accomplish extraordinary work. They concluded that individuals accomplish extraordinary feats when their leadership capacity is fully developed. To develop leadership potential, individuals must practice leadership just as an athlete practices her or his jump shot.

When an athlete practices her or his jump shot, the player is aware of the qualities associated with a successful shot. The same is true with leadership. Kouzes and Posner asked numerous leaders to share their personal-best leadership experience. Through these numerous stories, Kouzes and Posner identified five themes or behaviors consistent amongst these personal best leadership stories. These behaviors are known as the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. The practices are as follows:

1. **Model the Way.** This practice requires us to live by that familiar phrase "do what you say you will do" and live with integrity. Living with integrity means we must first have a well-developed values system that guides our behaviors and actions. However, this value system cannot be private but instead must be well-known by others. This does not require individuals to distribute a values statement but instead requires spending time with others and telling stories that illuminate values. By modeling the way, leaders earn respect.
2. **Inspire a Shared Vision.** Individuals who anticipate the future and articulate visions of what could be demonstrate this practice. Inspiring a shared vision requires leaders to dream and create a future that engages and rallies others to join forces. Leaders cannot demand

others join their vision, instead leaders understand the needs of their constituents which inspires others to join in.

3. **Challenge the Process.** When individuals challenge the status quo and seek new processes or look for alternatives, they embody the notion of challenging the process. They accept the risks and potential failures associated with such change and consider these potential obstacles as part of the improvement process instead of a hindrance. When failures do arise, leaders take the opportunity to learn from the situation and alter their path.
4. **Enable Others to Act.** At its most basic level, enabling others to act assumes that an individual alone cannot accomplish extraordinary measures; rather great feats require a collaborative effort. Leaders, who successfully embody this principle, empower others to realize their abilities and their power to influence. They understand that it takes the commitment of all stakeholders and work to foster trust and collaboration amongst their constituencies.
5. **Encourage the Heart.** This practice reminds us of the importance of celebration and care. Leaders who effectively encourage the heart, authentically celebrate others accomplishments and thank them for their work in a genuine manner. At the same time, encouraging the heart requires leaders to demonstrate care during difficult times which serve to move individuals forward and recognize their sacrifice.

Together these five principles provide a framework that encourages us to look inward and assess our leadership behaviors. An exemplary leader cannot excel in four of the practices while ignoring the fifth. Instead an exemplary leader practices each of these behaviors and works to enact these behaviors consistently. While individuals do not naturally excel in all practices, extraordinary leaders practice leadership, ensuring they embody each of these five practices.

While these practices provide a framework to self-assess, another way to view leadership is to consider what constituents admire in leaders? The short answer is credibility. The October 1 Wellness E-mail will focus on this important topic and delve into the complexities associated with credible leadership.

Resources

- Leadership Practices Inventory - Kouzes and Posner developed a self-assessment tool that provides the ability to assess your leadership behaviors. This tool also allows others to assess you, providing 360-degree feedback, and the opportunity to learn how others perceive your leadership. To access this tool, visit www.leadershipchallenge.com.
- Leadership for Life - Delta Gamma's Leadership for Life program provides several free leadership self-assessment tools. To access this tool visit the Resources for Everyone section of myDG.

References

Komives, S.R., Lucas, N., & McMahon, T.R. (1998). *Exploring leadership: For college students who want to make a difference*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kouzes, J.M. & Posner, B.Z. (2002). *The leadership challenge* (3rd ed). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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