



Delta Gamma Well Aware

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

Developing Credible Leadership

Consider a leadership moment when you felt compelled to support the work and message of a leader? Identify a time when others willingly followed you creating that seamless relationship that propelled your work forward? Or perhaps you have yet to experience the exhilaration that can come from such a relationship between the leader and follower. In the September 1, 2008 Wellness E-mail, we discussed the five behaviors of an exemplary leader. Another critical component of leadership is the relationship between a leader and follower.

According to Kouzes and Posner (2002), constituencies are more willing to follow leaders who possess a set of four characteristics. These characteristics have withstood the test of time and remain consistent amongst continents. Since 1987 Kouzes and Posner have been asking others what they look for in their leader and consistently found the values of (1) honesty, (2) forward-looking, (3) competence, and (4) inspiring to remain at the top of the list time after time.

- **Honesty** – Individuals want their leader to be truthful, ethical, and principled. Leaders of integrity and character instill confidence and help to strengthen the leader/follower relationship. The familiar phrase, “do what you say you will do” is how individuals measure a leader’s degree of honesty which in turn affects the leader’s ability to enable others to act.
- **Forward-looking** – Leaders who possess a vision for the future, clearly articulate this vision to others, and consider the future when making decisions demand respect from others. Individuals want to rally around a leader who envisions a better future.
- **Competent** – In order to work towards a vision, leaders who are capable and effective rally the troops. Even though a leader may be able to inspire a shared vision, followers must trust that the leader is able to implement this vision. Without competence, the vision seems like “pie in the sky.”
- **Inspiring** – Individuals want a leader who is enthusiastic and passionate about the future. A leader who articulates the vision in an encouraging manner receives high marks from others. Individuals want to envision a positive future and inspiring leaders provide this picture. Leaders who confirm negative emotions and feelings of hopelessness do not generate the paradigm shift needed to generate optimal performance that results from positive emotions.

Together these four qualities define credible leadership. Individuals whose leadership philosophy and ways of leading demonstrate these values generate constituencies who (1) are proud of their organization, (2) feel a sense of team, (3) articulate how their personal values align with the values of

the organization, (4) feel committed to the organization, and (5) have a sense of ownership in the organization.

Beyond the workforce and chapter/campus leadership, these same qualities affect consumer choice when purchasing products. If a consumer trusts a company, they are more likely to use their product than a competitor's even if that competitor's product is cheaper. Essentially, trust is a more defining element for consumers than low-cost. Low-cost without trust is irrelevant. At the same time, these characteristics are true for how we perceive religious and political leaders, newscasters, and doctors.

Kouzes and Posner (2002) share that before becoming a credible leader, we must first find our own voice which essentially means to clarify our values. Values "supply us with the moral compass by which to navigate the course of our daily lives" (p. 48). When a difficult decision arises in our personal, professional, or collegiate lives, values provided the foundation for our decision-making. A Delta Gamma PRO, Sue Stanek an initiate of Lambda-Minnesota, shared the following quote by Roy Disney, the brother of Walt Disney: "When values are clear, decisions are easy."

Values not only tell us what to do but give us energy when we act from a values-centered framework. Making decisions from this perspective provides a sense of control and generates order in one's life. Furthermore, individuals who make decisions based on values often avoid the feelings of guilt and embarrassment that come from some decisions.

Values clarity also increases commitment to the organization. Research indicates even if the organization clearly articulates its values but an individual is unclear on her or his values, commitment to the organization decreases. Even individuals who have a high degree of values clarity but are unsure of the organization's values are more likely to be committed than the individual with a lack of values identification.

How to Clarify My Values

Given the argument above, how do we gain clarity around our own values? The following strategies are a sampling of the many ways to consider your personal values thus leading to credible leadership:

- Reflect on the question "What do I care deeply about?" – The path towards values clarification begins by answering this question. The values associated with what you care deeply about provide a glimpse into your moral compass.
- Identify those you admire – We are attracted to the leaders we follow because we believe in them and feel a sense of connectedness to their values. Studying the values of these leaders provides insight into our values.
- Utilize Leadership for Life – This Delta Gamma program is available to each Delta Gamma collegian and alumna and provides various workshops and activities aimed at developing our leadership potential.
 - The Personal Values Assessment – This is an activity embedded in Leadership for Life that is a self-assessment tool that assists with values identification.
 - Independent Study – Leadership for Life also contains an Independent Study Course. The third module of the Independent Study Course – Leadership and the Self – walks us through a self-study of our personal values.

To access Leadership for Life go to the myDG section of www.deltagamma.org. Locate the Resources for Everyone tab and select Leadership for Life.

While the study of our values may seem daunting it is the first step to developing credible leadership thus strengthening the leader/follower relationship. According to James MacGregor Burns (2003), “Leaders embrace values; values grip leaders. The stronger the value systems, the more strongly leaders can be empowered and the more deeply leaders can empower followers” (p. 211). Best of luck on this journey of self-exploration.

References

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