

Major Objectives of Leadership

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MEMO:

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### Major Objectives of Leadership

Leadership is not something one simply happens upon. Leadership takes careful thought and planning to achieve, and even that does not always produce the results desired. People who are successful leaders today often pour into others and share what has brought them such success. Throughout the course of this semester, there are multiple leaders which have spoken and can be trusted in their wisdom. All knowledge from this class can be categorized as one of three major objectives that exemplify what embodies a leader. These principles are focusing on character, becoming a life-long learner, and going above and beyond.

The first and perhaps most important leadership objective is to focus on character. Not only must leaders focus on their personal character, but they must also focus on the character of their followers or employees. Jim Collins details this principle clearly in the first couple chapters of his book, *Good to Great*. Leaders must be trusted because of who they are, not necessarily what vision they have or what they've done. The right people in the organization make all the difference. He says, "It's not how you compensate your executives, it's which executive you have to compensate in the first place" (Collins, 2001). The first priority is the people. Without them, the organization can crumble. Sometimes leaders must even fire people who have been at the company for a long time, because they simply do not perform or have the character that the company needs. Collins believes that it is always worth waiting to hire people until the right person is found rather than hiring less-than-excellent workers immediately. (Collins, 2001).

Vern Clark, former Chief of Naval Operations, also spoke extremely highly about a person's character. Clark determined that many interviews for positions focus on the competence level of an individual, yet when the hard decisions have to be made, the leader's character is what determines the level of the decision. He believes that 90% of leaders who fail, fail simply

because of their character, rather than their competence level. (V. Clark, 2016) A leader must have integrity. Clark quoted John Maxwell, who said that “People buy into a leader before they buy into a vision” (Maxwell, 2012).

Ron Clark, founder of the Ron Clark Academy and known as “America’s Educator,” also believes whole-heartedly in the character of a leader. His book, *Move Your Bus*, is dedicated to finding and keeping the right people as a leader. The main principles discussed in his book detail the different kinds of employees that are in an organization and how they fit. In brief, runners are the employees who work hard, are committed to the vision, and do everything without complaining. Joggers do some work, but they aren’t as committed to the vision and sometimes ask questions (R. Clark, 2015). Employees that always ask questions, act negatively, and aren’t committed are walkers, and people who do no work whatsoever but simply try to get by and avoid their circumstances are called riders. Clark shows that finding runners to get onto the “bus” of an organization makes the biggest difference in leadership (R. Clark, 2016). He says in his book *The Essential 55*, “It doesn’t matter who wins or loses, because we know that we are all trying our best, and we enjoy each other’s efforts, no matter what the final outcome of the game” (R. Clark, 2003). He recognizes that the focus of leadership is what is inside a person.

Daniel Goleman also wrote about the character of a leader in his article about leadership. He talked about how motivation changes a person’s interest level and work efficiency in a company because their passion level is changed. Having people in the company who actually enjoy working and getting things done is much preferable to people who don’t enjoy their job and begrudgingly serve. Keeping score and raising the bar are two great ways proposed by Goleman as motivational techniques (Goleman, 1998).

A true leader focuses on the character of the company and the employees, to find employees that are loyal (R. Clark, 2003), to develop the current employees into further leaders (Maxwell, 2012), and to strengthen their own character to conquer the tasks ahead of them (V. Clark, 2016).

True leaders also learn. All the leaders that have spoken or influenced this class in some way remind everyone to always learn. Ben Carson, former Republican Presidential Candidate and world-renowned brain surgeon, spent much of his 2014 Forum presentation discussing this idea of learning. Leaders recognize that everyone fails. The only way to become a better leader is to learn from mistakes and grow because of it. Leaders must take risks, fail, learn, and repeat. Effective leaders are also able to admit their mistakes and be genuine about who they are and their mistakes so that the company as a whole can learn and grow from it. True leaders are flexible so that they can adapt to what they've learned. Carson also stressed the importance of finding others who can be mentors because experience simply can't teach a leader everything they need to know on their own (Carson, 2014).

James Brown, famous sportscaster, heavily encouraged this point as well. In his seven fundamentals, he talked about always having a thirst for knowledge. He encouraged the audience to always be willing to go the extra mile to learn; there should never be a time where a leader is not learning. Learning from tasks and responsibilities in a position will change the leader far more than simply completing a task for completion sake. Brown believed that from a strong desire for learning will spark growth and change in not only the leader but also the organization as a whole (Brown, 2016).

The last major objective of leaders is to go above and beyond. Byron Pitts, journalist and co-anchor of ABC's nightline, talked about going above and beyond in his leadership. The

deadliest weapon that leaders face is indifference, Pitts said. Most of his talk reflected on the fact that there is a war between good and evil going on, and if leaders do not step up and take a stand for what is right, evil will win (Pitts, 2016).

Marcus Luttrell, former United States SEAL and inspiration for the movie *Survivor*, spend the majority of his time at the 2014 forum talking about this issue. He faced obstacles and difficulties like most Americans today can't imagine, and he kept going. So many of his friends died before his eyes but he didn't give up because he knew something was worth it in the end. Luttrell says that he kept reminding himself that he served his country and that he had a purpose to accomplish (Down Range Film, 2015). True leaders know that there is never a point of getting comfortable; leadership goes the extra mile and takes the extra step to be above and beyond what anyone else has done.

James Brown also talked about this with his seven fundamentals. These included having good written and oral communication skills, dressing appropriately for any occasion, and always being prompt. He learned from personal experience that these things, while not explicitly qualities of a leader, often determine who gets the position because they have gone above and beyond the rest (Brown, 2016). Leaders must be willing to make sacrifices to their personal routine to become better.

Ron Clark perhaps knew this the best. His book, *The Essential 55*, spends pages upon pages detailing the minute aspects of life that he said were vital to the essence of a leader. A leader is not just a position, it is a lifestyle. A minor example is a company he visited. He says, "They had someone greet me at the door, take me on a tour of the facilities, and introduce me to all of the workers... They certainly rolled out the red carpet and made me feel welcome" (R. Clark, 2003). This inspires him to make rules as simple as "If you approach a door and someone

is following you, hold the door” (R. Clark, 2003). His tips range from classroom control techniques to habits at home, etiquette with friends and actions performed when no one is watching. He knows that a true leader is dedicated to having the highest quality of service and leadership. These things do not happen by chance; careful change and watchfulness is required to ensure that excellence is achieved.

These leaders have taken careful thought to achieve their status, and they do not take it lightly. The knowledge that they impart serves as inspiration and guidelines for future generations who will rise up and lead. Throughout this class leaders have shown that these three major objectives play the largest role in becoming a true leader. Focusing on character, becoming a life-long learner, and going above and beyond are the stepping stones to success.

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