

# SERVANT - LEADERSHIP

A Pathway to  
Care, Excellence, Learning and Leadership  
in the  
Social Services Department



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## Foreword

***“The most difficult step that any developing servant-leader must take is to begin the personal journey toward wholeness and self-discovery”***

*Joseph Jarworski*

I am aware as I begin the writing of this booklet on servant-leadership, that I am still in the process of learning the lessons of leadership, this, after over 30 years in leadership positions. I suspect that any leader, if he or she is honest would have to conclude the same. Why is this? It is because leadership is not something that you “get” and then move on. It is a process. Leadership is not so much what one does as who one is, and is becoming. Leadership is often seen as a set of exterior actions by a person who holds some type of power or influence over others. What is not always obvious is that the exterior actions of a leader are deeply rooted in the leader’s interior life. That is why it is critical that leaders continue to nurture who they are on the inside. We must remember that what we offer our workplaces as leaders is a reflection of the person we are.

Of all the approaches to leadership that I have studied and practiced over the years, servant-leadership comes closest to having the potential to truly renew and transform lives and workplaces. Servant-leadership does not preclude the use of other leadership methods and strategies. Rather, it provides a set of overarching principles that help guide our way, regardless of any specific leadership model(s) we may be utilizing.

This booklet begins by defining servant-leadership. It then presents a series of ten principles that characterizes this approach to leadership. These principles are not a set of techniques but rather, a set of behaviours, attitudes and beliefs. It represents a different way of working together. When practiced with passion, compassion and commitment, these principles allow leaders to offer hope to those they lead. It is the hope that things can be better if everyone takes personal responsibility for making it so. It is the hope that every one in the workplace matters and that they can make a positive difference in the organization. It is the hope that as we develop the courage to change ourselves we will effect changes in one’s organization. It was Gandhi who called his followers to “be the change that they wanted in the world.” One of the greatest gifts that a servant-leader can offer others is to challenge them to become the change that they say they want in their workplaces.

### **Uses for this booklet**

It is my hope that this booklet can be shared over coffee, in staff meetings, in small groups and in the many creative ways that staff will come up with. After each of the ten principles of servant-leadership you will find a series of questions for reflection. These questions can be used as a catalyst for further discussion and exploration. At the end of the booklet, you can find additional resources that you may find useful if you want to deepen your knowledge and practice of servant-leadership.

The servant-leadership journey is one that will bring you many personal rewards as well as provide you with another pathway to contribute to enriching our workplace.

## What is Servant-Leadership?

***“For many years I have told people that although there are a lot of books on leadership, there is only one that serious students have to read, Servant-Leadership by Robert K. Greenleaf...few others penetrate to deeper insights into the nature of real leadership”***

*Peter Senge*

***“To live with the legitimate power involved in servant-leadership, not a power that dominates or controls, but a power that heals, restores, and reconciles, humility is necessary”***

*Shann Ferch*

The term servant-leadership was first coined by Robert K. Greenleaf. He first wrote about servant-leadership in his influential 1970 essay “The Servant Leader.” Greenleaf spent most of his career as director of management research, development and education at AT&T. After his retirement in 1964 he spent the next 25 years in a second career as an author and consultant. It is during this time, beginning at the age of 60, that he continued to develop and write about the concept of servant-leadership using his observations of more than 40 years in corporate life as well as his extensive exposure to the not-for-profit world. He consulted to such organizations as MIT, Ford Foundation, The Lilly Endowment, Ohio University and many others.

Servant-Leadership has come into the forefront in the last few years. It is actively supported, written about and presented by many of today’s top management and leadership authors and practitioners such as Margaret Wheatley, Scott Peck, Peter Senge, Joseph Jaworski, Ken Blanchard, Stephen Covey, Warren Bennis and other leaders all over the world who are committed to finding better, more compassionate ways of leading and managing workplaces today.

Greenleaf defined Servant-Leadership in this way:

***“Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived?”***

Larry Spears, the Executive Director of the Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership in the United States writes that the “servant-leader concept continues to grow in its influence and impact. In fact, we have witnessed an unprecedented explosion of interest in and practice of servant-leadership in the past 15 years. The idea of servant-leadership, now in its fourth decade continues to create a quiet revolution in workplaces around the world.”<sup>1</sup>

Spears further writes, “In countless for-profit and not-for-profit organizations today we are seeing traditional, autocratic, and hierarchical modes of leadership yielding to a different way of working-one based on teamwork and community, one that seeks to

involve others in decision making, one strongly based in ethical and caring behavior, and one that is attempting to enhance the personal growth of workers, while improving the caring and quality of our many institutions. This emerging approach to leadership and service is called servant-leadership.”<sup>2</sup>

Servant-leadership is not another leadership fad. It is a way of being and working with each other in the workplace. “Servant-leadership truly offers hope and guidance for the creation of better, more caring institutions.”<sup>3</sup>

Servant-Leadership principles support the department’s progressive excellence plan as it speaks to its four pillars of Care, Excellence, Learning, and Leadership.

# Principles of Servant-Leadership

## 1. Listening

***“When someone listens to us with real concentration and expresses sincere care for our struggles and our pains, we feel that something very deep is happening to us. Slowly, fears melt away, tensions dissolve, anxieties retreat, and we discover that we carry within us something we can trust and offer as a gift to others. The simple experience of being valuable and important to someone else has a tremendous recreative power”***

*Henri Nouwen*

Listening is the foundation of Servant-Leadership as it nourishes all the other principles. Listening is offering our total presence to another person. The message that we are trying to communicate by our listening as servant-leaders is that “I am here to listen, to try to understand.”<sup>4</sup> The often quoted prayer of St. Francis summarizes the listening efforts of a servant-leader when it speaks of seeking to more often understand rather than to be understood. Albert Camus wrote “In the midst of winter, I learned that there was in me an invincible summer”. To truly listen to others is to help them to discover their “invincible summers” in the midst of whatever they are struggling with at the moment.

We speak at 125-250 words per minute and think at 1000-3000 words per minute. This means that we have a lot of free time inside our heads as a person is speaking to us. How we train ourselves to use this time will determine how effective we are at listening. Do we use this thinking time to focus our complete attention on the other person or do we allow ourselves to be distracted or preoccupied with our own thoughts and agendas? When we discipline ourselves to suspend our own thoughts, feelings and agendas to truly focus on the other person, we are demonstrating a deep commitment to listen intently and offer our total presence to another. “When asked what makes a great communicator, we usually think about being able to speak eloquently and effectively, rather than about listening. But when we listen first, we create the foundation upon which great communication can be established. Think about the benefits when someone listens to us. It builds our self-esteem, shows we have worth, informs us we are not alone, helps us work through our problems, causes us to feel important and respected as a person, and tells us the other person is interested in us. We all need these things, which is why listening is such an important skill to develop and nurture.”<sup>5</sup>

This approach to listening necessitates that we prepare ourselves by cultivating a quiet and peaceful inner life. This can be accomplished by taking time to



implement simple actions such as breathing deeply, closing our doors and quieting our minds so we can more readily focus on the person we are about to encounter. We can also spend time in quiet reflection and meditation to make sure that we separate ourselves from our anxieties and racing thoughts before meeting with another person. In this way, we are better prepared to place ourselves in another-centered mode. We are better prepared to create the conditions for effective listening by extending hospitality, warmth, and our full attention to the person we are encountering.

By practicing this approach to listening we can all become effective servant-leaders in our workplace whether we have a formal position of leadership or not. Leadership is always more than position. By practicing listening with more focus, attention and compassion for other persons, we are all capable of demonstrating in our daily workplace interactions, the true meaning of servant-leadership.

### **For Reflection/Discussion**

1. Did you ever have the experience of having been deeply listened to by another? What was it like?
2. What gives you grounding and peace in your life? How do you translate this to your workplace?
3. How can you become a more effective listener at work?
4. How can your team become more effective in listening?
5. What commitment(s) are you prepared to make to more consistently practice this first principle of servant-leadership?

***“Whenever we have an opportunity or responsibility to influence the thinking and the behavior of others, the first choice we are called to make is whether to see the moment through the eyes of self-interest or for the benefit of those we are leading”***

*Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges*

## **2. Empathy**

***“It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye”***

*Antoine de Saint-Exupery*

People need to be accepted and affirmed for their special and unique gifts and strengths. The empathic listening servant-leader calls forth the best in others. He/she encourages their followers to work at the level of their strengths.

Work and business approaches often concentrate on process, strategies, rules, structure, logic, budgets and bottom line numbers. These are often referred to as the “hard skills.” However important the hard skills are, more and more

organizations are beginning to realize that to be successful they also need to focus on the so called “soft skills” such as empathy, creativity and intuition.

Empathy is the capacity to enter into another’s feelings and ideas. It is seeing the world from another’s eyes. It is being sensitive to another’s experiences. It is often expressed as a compassionate concern for colleagues at work. The Servant-leader practicing empathy in his/her organization is always on the lookout to insure that the worth of his staff as human beings is recognized quite separately from what they do for the leader or for the organization. In empathy, “being” takes precedent over “doing.”

Empathy is the ability to tune into some aspect of the inner world of the person we are listening to. Empathy always leads to true “dialogue” rather than mere “chit-chat” between two people. Empathy leads us as leaders to want to become better than we are so that in turn we can help others to bring their lives and work to a higher level. Empathy believes in others despite their imperfections and mistakes. When we feel that our leaders believe in us we will want to strive for greater excellence. We will want to become better people and better leaders.

There are few things more rewarding in life than to see the impact of our empathy on others. Increasing our empathy in the workplace can make a huge difference. People begin to feel a greater sense of belonging and a greater feeling of significance. They begin to believe that their efforts are worthwhile and that their skills and strengths are appreciated.

### **For Reflection/Discussion**

1. Think of people who have exemplified empathic qualities such as Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa or perhaps someone you have encountered on your life journey. How has this person(s) affected you by demonstrating empathy?
2. What could you do as an individual staff member to increase your empathic skills?
3. How can your work team increase their capacity for empathy?

### **3. Healing**

***“Leadership is a gift we offer others to make their work life healthier, more purposeful and meaningful. For this reason, leadership must spring from a deep place inside of us. This interior place must be constantly nurtured if we want our leadership to remain a life giving, healing force for others”***

*Hugh Drouin*

In workplaces today, many people have broken spirits. Servant-leaders recognize that they have an opportunity and a privilege to contribute to the wholeness of those with whom they come into contact. In this sense, we are all

leaders. This search for wholeness, to be more complete as human beings is something that we all share. We all want to matter for something or for someone. We all need to feel a sense of belonging, a sense of emotional safety in the workplace.

There are three necessary ingredients for healing and renewal to take hold in organizations. These are faith, hope and compassion.

**Faith** is the capacity to see and feel that which is invisible and make it real to our followers. Gandhi's faith in a free India, Nelson Mandela's faith that apartheid could be broken, Greenleaf's faith that organizations could be more life giving to workers are all expressions of a faith made real. Faith is being willing to let go of our fears and trust that things can be better and that in some small way, we can help in bettering our workplace. Faith comes when a group of people dare to commit to each other to build something great, something of excellence. This can be reflected in the work we do for our Progressive Excellence plan right now, as we work at building a great department for all of us. Blaise Pascal, the famous French philosopher and mathematician once said: "Faith is a sounder guide than reason. Reason can go only so far, but faith has no limits."

People who have faith deeply ingrained in their souls have the confidence to believe that tough times never last, and that this too shall pass, and that hurts and painful experiences are often blessings in disguise.

Faith is a deep knowing that the darkness will never overcome the light. Faith believes in the tremendous potential of others. It believes that we can play a part in bringing ourselves and others to greater healing and wholeness. Jackie Robinson, the first African American to be allowed to play professional baseball said. "A life is not important except for the impact it has on other lives."

**Hope** is the desire and the promise that we can be more and do more with our lives. It is the opposite of despair. Around the world, people in organizations are increasingly feeling a sense of urgency to discover deeper meaning in their lives and work. Many are waiting to add their voices in support of human dignity.

Victor Frankl, the Jewish psychiatrist from Vienna who was imprisoned in Auschwitz during the Second World War, wrote in his classic book, *Man's Search for Meaning*. "Everyone has his/her own specific mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he/she cannot be replaced, nor can his/her life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is as unique as his/her specific opportunity to implement it." Knowing that we are here with a special task or mission to accomplish is what fills our lives with hope and that is the hope that we can offer others. We can let them know by how we treat them that their life is important. We can let them know that they are precious persons with something meaningful to accomplish. To come to the realization that we are very important and needed in the workplace, that we can make a difference is a

powerful experience of healing. It can move us from discouragement to a fresh hope.

Hope is often experienced in our daily work in these ways:

- It looks for the good in people instead of harping on the negative.
- It discovers what can be done instead of grumbling about what cannot.
- It regards problems, large or small as opportunities.
- It pushes ahead when it would be easy to quit.
- It lights a candle instead of cursing the darkness. (Words by Anon)

**Compassion** is the third ingredient in healing. Compassion is the willingness to suspend our judgments of others. It is the courage to put aside whatever we are doing or thinking to focus on the other person and their needs. Compassion is communicating to the other that I care for you with no strings attached and with no hidden agendas. Michael Green, the noted British theologian and popular writer says that there are three questions people ask themselves today: Where do I come from? What am I worth? Where am I going? Compassion speaks to the second question, the question of worth. The biggest impact of compassion is to communicate to another their tremendous value as a human being.

Healing in organizations often begins with the leader's willingness to reach out in a spirit of reconciliation. A servant-leader is continuously looking for opportunities to be a healing force in the organization by extending to others the opportunity to dialogue with each other to discover peaceful creative resolutions to problems and interpersonal issues that arise. The servant-leader is humble and can transcend ego to admit his/her shortcomings and mistakes. By doing so he/she frees others to do likewise. This ends the blame game that is far too common in workplaces. It restores peoples' creative energies to work on solutions rather than expending it covering up or in being defensive. Healing holds much promise to transform workplaces today.

Implicit in the understanding of the principle of healing is the universal truth that we are all broken in some way, and that none of us have it all together all of the time. We need each other in organizations more than we care to admit. Greenleaf writes: "There is something subtle communicated to one who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between servant-leader and led, is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something they share."<sup>6</sup>

Always remember that you have potential to reach out to others beyond your wildest imaginings. As you begin to give to others of your time and of your compassion, you will be participating in the great work of organizational healing. You will be evolving your leadership based on service. You will discover that servant-leadership is a gift of the heart in the service of others.

***“I have come to realize that I have depended on followers for many things - spirit, commitment, inspiration, expertise. At the very heart of leadership lays the necessity of making it possible for followers to contribute”***

*Max Depree, Leadership Jazz*

#### **For Reflection/Discussion**

1. What thoughts resonated with you as you read the section on healing?
2. How do you think some of these thoughts could be put into practice in our daily work?
3. In what ways could these thoughts affect your leadership approach?
4. What are other ways that these thoughts could be used to enrich our workplace?

#### **4. Awareness**

***“As leaders we need to make room for continuous learning for ourselves and for others. That is the pathway to increased awareness. We can never be satisfied with the way things are. We need to release the synergy of mutual learning in the workplace so that the organization’s awareness can continuously expand”***

*Hugh Drouin*

The servant-leader works on his/her awareness and stays awake to the interconnectedness and interdependence in organizations. He/she remains focused on how we can learn from each other in order to build stronger connections between individuals, programs and systems. Awareness is the recognition that strong relationships and an absolute commitment to continuous learning are key to effective servant-leadership in organizations. This is closely related to Senge’s learning organization. “The learning organization is characterized by openness, freedom of expression, and a focused curiosity in which leaning becomes practiced as both a central value and a core competency.”<sup>7</sup> Sharpened awareness helps us to focus on our essential core values as an organization and protects us from losing our focus on these values as we experience bureaucratic and/or political pressures.

***“Work can be a place of growth where we are stretched to accomplish what we never thought we could”***

*Hugh Drouin*

#### **For Reflection/Discussion**

1. How could the principle of awareness be useful in keeping a focus on the essentials of organizational life?
2. What do we mean by continuous learning in an organization?
3. How could you develop continuous learning in your team or area?

## 5. Persuasion

***“The journey of life is to move from a self-serving heart to a serving heart. You finally become an adult when you realize that life is about what you give, rather than what you get. Every day leaders face hundreds of challenges to their intent. Every day we must recalibrate our heart. You’ll never be able to say, “Now I’m a servant leader, and I’m never going to be self-serving.” We’re all going to be grabbed off course by our egos. Just ask yourself, “How am I going to be today? Am I going to be self-serving? Or am I going to be a servant?”***

*Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges*

By this fifth characteristic of servant-leadership, Greenleaf means to “distinguish between leadership that relies on positional authority and coercion, in contrast to leadership that works through a process of influence, example and moral power.”<sup>8</sup> Persuasion is gentle and respectful. It is done by openly sharing our experiences and values with others in such a way that it invites others to reflect further on their own experiences and values. In this way, servant-leadership is not a new program or a set of edicts from above that can be implemented in the department. It is first a set of principles, values and attitudes that have to be lived daily in each of our leadership endeavors. It is good to remember that all of us exercise leadership regardless of our position, if we define leadership as having potential to influence another person. We all have that potential regardless of our role in the organization.

***“A leader is someone with the power to project either shadow or light onto some part of the world and onto lives of the people who dwell there. A leader shapes the ethos in which others must live, an ethos as light filled as heaven or as shadowy as hell. A good leader is intensely aware of the interplay of inner shadow and light, lest the act of leadership do more harm than good”***

*Parker Palmer*

### **For Reflection/Discussion**

1. What are the potential influences that you have on others in your workplace?
2. What can we do so that we are more often in the serving rather than the self-serving mode in our daily work?
3. In what ways can we be more respectful and gentle with others?

## 6. Conceptualization

***“...leaders have a unique responsibility to search for and articulate coherence for the groups they lead...this is a process that is both intellectual and spiritual, and that rather than being the solitary gift of a leader working in isolation from peers, the process of conceptualization is rooted in relationships and shared meanings”***

*John Burkhardt and Larry Spears*

Conceptualization is the ability to think beyond the day-to-day realities. It is evolving one's capacity, courage and inspiration to create big goals and to engage others in the pursuit of these goals. The servant-leader is not only concerned about short term objectives but is able to think beyond today's problems and imagine the future potential of the organization.

In our world, we are inundated with information yet we remain starved for meaning. Servant-leaders are continuously in the process of developing meaning and purpose in their own lives. As such, they are able to reflect a sense of purpose and coherence to others in the organization that may themselves be searching for a greater sense of purpose and meaning in their lives through the maze of information, media sound bites, difficult life and work challenges and frantic activity. The servant-leader's role is to help in the recognition of what Teilhard de Chardin called “a great hope in common.”<sup>9</sup>

Our “great hope in common” in the Social Services Department is to believe and feel that we make a difference. Our leaders must know how to communicate to their staff that they make a difference, that they matter, that what they do and who they are and are becoming is very significant to their colleagues and to those they serve. That is the essence of conceptualization as a servant-leader.

### **For Reflection/Discussion**

1. How can we get greater purpose and meaning in our work despite the daily challenges ?
2. Take a few minutes to brainstorm creative ideas that your team could implement to make work more fun, creative and purposeful.

***“We know in our hearts that to be included is both beautiful and right. Leaders have to find a way to work that out, to contribute toward that vision”***

*Max Depree*

## 7. Foresight

***“The best leaders, like the best music, inspire us to see new possibilities”***

*Max Depre*

Foresight complements conceptualization yet it is different. “Conceptual skills allow us to see the big picture, the where we want to go. Foresight allows us to map out how we are going to get there by anticipating the various consequences of our actions and then choosing the actions that will best serve the organization.”<sup>10</sup>

“The characteristics of conceptualization and foresight are particularly important for servant-leaders...they must balance the need to empower others with the need to be strong, visionary, transformational leaders. It demands that leaders be aware of their individual situations, that they listen to others, conceptualize the big picture, and persuade and empower others to lend their own talents in fulfilling the mission of the organization. In this way, servant-leaders are not victims of their organizations and the people they lead: they are the co-creators of the future. They must seek to find ways to create win/win situations, which ensure that all concerned-leader, staff, organization, and customer-survive and thrive.”<sup>11</sup>

“Leaders with foresight do not see the world as a closed, fixed and mechanistic but rather as open, dynamic, and alive.”<sup>12</sup> They always keep the future in mind. They come into an organization to build not only for the present but especially for the future. They see the privilege of leadership as an opportunity to leave a legacy; one that is positive, creative and life giving for staff. Servant-leaders are not caught up in the trappings of their position or role. They live beyond the ego. They view their work as a calling, as a vocation. In its Latin root, vocation means voice. Servant-leaders with foresight see their presence in an organization as an opportunity to help others find their voice. They help people find the beautiful music inside of them and empower them to express this music to enrich their own lives and in the process to enrich their places of work.

***“Sometimes, in the tiny moments of life, light suddenly is shed on our whole existence”***

*James Joyce*

### **For Reflection/Discussion**

1. How have you been encouraged to lend your own talents to contribute to your workplace?
2. What type of legacy would you like to leave your workplace?
3. What strengths are still inside of you that you have not been able to express in your work?



4. What would it take for you to be able to express more of your gifts and strengths at work?
5. How can you help each other in your team to become more aware of each other's gifts and strengths?

***“The power for authentic leadership is found, not in external arrangements, but in the human heart. Authentic leaders in every setting, from families to nation-states, aim at liberating the heart, their own and others, so that its powers can liberate the world”***

*Parker Palmer*

## 8. Stewardship:

***“People, relationships, values, and beliefs are most important to a corporation and, fittingly, the most fragile components”***

*Max Depree*

Stewardship calls upon the servant-leader to protect and nurture people, relationships, values and beliefs in an organization. Stewardship is defined by Peter Block as “the willingness to be accountable for the well-being of the organization by operating in service, rather than in control, of those around us.”<sup>13</sup> Stewardship means that we stretch our vision of work to use our influence as leaders to make work a more caring, more responsible and accountable place based on service to each other first and then by extension to our clients. Stewardship also means to be on the lookout for ways that we can provide staff with a meaningful role and “to recognize the value they bring to the organization.”<sup>14</sup> This type of mind shift is in the process of taking root in many organizations today. Research has shown that supportive staff policies make a positive difference not only in creating a healthy workplace but also on its positive impact on the bottom line both in the corporate and not-for-profit worlds.

Stewardship is also looking to build something for the future. It means to build programs and services that will serve the community for years to come. In this way, we not only serve today's clients but we build strong and effective services that will also serve tomorrow's clients.

***“In the end, being a servant-leader is not something you do but rather something you are. It is about creating the right environment to get the best out of people and unleash their true potential. Servant-leadership should not be misinterpreted as soft management-some of the most tough-minded leaders are firm believers in and exponents of servant-leadership. In the competitive reality of today’s global marketplace, it will only be those organizations whose people not only willingly volunteer their tremendous creative talent, commitment, and loyalty, but whose organizations align their structures, systems, and management style to support the empowerment of their people that will survive and thrive”***

*Don DeGraaf, Colin Tilley, Larry Neal*

### **For Reflection/Discussion**

1. How does having supportive staff policies relate to stewardship and accountability in organizations?
2. What ideas do you have that would help our management to empower people more?
3. In your view, what does an organization, workgroup or team need to do to thrive?
4. What can your team do to become better stewards in our workplace?

## **9. Commitment to the Growth of People**

***“With the traditional pyramid, the boss is always responsible and the staff is supposed to be responsive to the boss. When you turn the pyramid upside down, those roles get reversed. Your people become responsible and the job of management is to be responsive to their people. That creates a very different environment for implementation. If you work for your people, then what is the purpose of being a manager? To help them accomplish their goals. Your job is to help them win”***

*Ken Blanchard*

A focus on the growth of people in organizations is vital in today’s organizations. By helping employees expand their thinking through fostering exposure to new ideas and new ways of doing things, we gain the ability to develop new programs and services to serve our clients better. We also help employees to make a difference in their lives and in the lives of the clients they serve.

Management can show visible support for people’s growth by keeping an open door policy and communicating their openness to new ideas and a resolve to risk and try out these new ideas. By doing this, leaders contribute to nurturing a culture of creativity, risk taking and innovation in the organization.

Supporting the growth of people can happen in both a formal and informal ways in organizations. A formal way would be to make seminars, courses, workshops, speakers and other learning resources available to as many staff as possible. Informally, the great ideas and practices already in existence in the organization can be shared among people when encouraged, supported and nurtured by the leadership. The servant-leader's responsibility is to create an environment of trust and affirmation in the organization where people feel free to share their creative ideas and excellent practices with each other. If my ideas are encouraged and appreciated, I am more likely to want to share these and act on them. It can be very rewarding for staff to have their ideas accepted, respected, affirmed and acted upon.

***"...people will only grow and develop in the work situation if the culture of the organization allows it"***

*Don DeGraaf, Colin Tilley, Larry Neal*

### **For Reflection/Discussion**

1. Why is it so important for people to keep growing in organizations?
2. In what ways can personal and professional growth be fostered in your work area?
3. What creative ideas would you have to enhance the growth of people in our department?

## **10. Building Community**

***"We hunger for community in the workplace and are a great deal more productive when we find it. To feed this hunger...is to harness energy and productivity beyond imagining"***

*Marvin R. Weisbord*

***"...our century which has lost the sense of community and has glorified the individual, has been so poor in great personalities...Those who become creative and original personalities are not the ones who live their own lives, but those who forget themselves in giving themselves for others"***

*Paul Tournier*

The most important legacy of a true servant-leader is to work hard at creating community in his/ her organization. The leadership that is needed to bring about strong and lasting workplace community is one that is steeped in strong values, in compassion, in spiritual sensitivity, and in a deep longing and passion to see the development of people as the number one priority in the organization. It is a servant-leadership that places the needs of others in their workplace above their own.

The organization of this century will increasingly demand this type of people-centered leadership. In his book "The Fifth Discipline," Peter Senge quoting the pollster Daniel Yankelovich points out that "a basic shift in attitude in the workplace from an instrumental to a sacred view of work is occurring."<sup>15</sup> Simply put, caring for one's workers is back on the agenda in an increasing number of organizations. In her book "The Human Touch," Jean Plas writes: "Somehow in corporate America, we got the idea that "businesslike" meant uncaring. This tragic misconception has been devastating not only for product development and quality improvement goals, but also for the well-being of the American worker."<sup>16</sup> She continues in this same line of thinking, when she writes: "In the middle of this frantic century most corporate executives got the idea that they had to carry a big stick in order to survive and had to play hard ball in order to win. That's not true. Being willing to be massively human gets a higher quality job done. Drawing strength from humanness rather than inhumanness creates credibility and leadership excellence."<sup>17</sup>

Plas's words have a prophetic ring to them. Organizations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will have to become "massively human" or risk losing their souls and their reason for being. Technology, flow charts and management systems, however important to the success of an organization, can never replace humanness. The human soul is not, and will never be subjugated to a mechanistic view of the world. It will continue to need expression outside of, and beyond technology. John Naisbitt's words from the 1980s that we cannot have "high tech without high touch" are truer than ever. Organizations cannot solely be designed to be technologically driven. They must at the same time be people driven. This is why the building of community in the workplace becomes so crucial to the long term success and viability of any enterprise. In true workplace community, people are always first.

Authentic workplace community means a sense of we-ness, a sense of togetherness, a sense of openness and safety that permeates an organization. It is often experienced as a sense of unity and oneness in a workplace. It is a feeling of belonging. It is a feeling that there is a purpose for one's life and work within one's organization. Community is a place where people matter, where people are deeply respected. It is an organizational climate and culture that is based on mutual trust, nurture, support and compassion. Community is a place where people are encouraged to discover and use their strengths.

When community is present in a workplace we find much peace, stability, joy, humor, patience, freedom to risk, minimal fear, lots of courage, gentleness, loyalty, passion, commitment and high trust.

Some years ago, after giving a talk on community, a woman who had experienced community in her workplace came forward to express her gratitude. Her story was truly inspirational. As a result of her workplace community experience she had come to realize that she could be and do much more than she ever thought she could. She had taken a series of courses and developed a

new self-confidence. She had quickly grown to become one of the most valuable and successful members of her organization. Her internal fire was lit when she discovered how truly precious she was as a human being. This occurred when her gifts and strengths were affirmed by her workplace community. Through this experience, she gained the confidence and the courage to throw open her life and move forward toward her dream. Experiencing workplace community had changed her life forever.

The building and maintenance of community in an organization is never easy. It means discovering and being willing to put into practice, new ways of working with each other. For many organizations, it means a radical shift in thinking and behaving. It requires the courage to move away from the traditional adversarial ways of doing business to new ways based on a spirit of cooperation, unity and compassion.

To maintain community, we will have to constantly re-invent fresh supportive ways of being with each other at work so as to not lose our way. We have very little choice but to take up the challenge to build and maintain community in our workplaces if we desire organizations that contain greater humanity, civility and soul. These are the only organizations that will sustain human growth and encourage the emergence of greater human potential.

People in workplace communities can welcome each other with compassion, because they are aware of their own painful struggles and shortcomings. They never forget in extending their care for colleagues that they also might very well be the ones in need of the listening and the compassion at some point in their work life. That's the "stuff" of community. It's not the big crisis that will get an organization in the end. It is the little things that silently creep in and eat away at the edges until they reach the organization's core and quickly swallow it up in a sea of criticism, backbiting, insensitivity, viciousness and inhumanity.

For community to prosper in a workplace, people must feel a sense that they are contributing to the success of the enterprise. They must feel as if they matter. When these elements are deeply rooted in a workplace, there will be an aliveness and creativity in the organization that will propel it forward in the achievement of its values, vision, and mission. There will be a new fire in the souls of the workers.

Organizations built on community become effective businesses with a heart. Their humanness spills over to the workers first and then to the clients. Clients of human centered organizations respond with deep gratitude for having their needs met with excellence and compassion from a staff who feel the same way about the treatment they receive in their workplace. Care, excellence, learning, leadership are all very contagious and clients catch it quickly from staff.

The building of community in organizations is the central purpose of all the actions of a servant-leader because he/she is aware how life changing a workplace community can be. A true workplace community always touches on the personal level. It touches on the truth inside of us. It exposes in very gentle ways, our fears, our weaknesses and our feelings of lack of self-worth. It then calls us to greatness by filling our lives with courage, value, purpose and strengths we never knew we had. It calls us to “be” more and “do” more than we ever thought possible. Community ignites a fire in our soul. Its light is always greater than the darkness in the world.

***“Our internal fire is lit when we discover how truly precious we are as human beings”***

*Hugh Drouin*

### **For Reflection/Discussion**

1. What would building strong workplace community mean in our own department?
2. What steps could your team take in your area, towards working at community building?
3. How could you build the ten principles of servant-leadership in your work area?

## Conclusion

The journey of servant-leadership is both an exhilarating and rewarding one. I am confident that as our department embraces the principles and concepts expounded in this small booklet that we will continue together to make positive changes in our workplace.

Servant-leadership is another phase in our Progressive Excellence Plan (PEP) that so many of us have been a part of already. The principles of servant-leadership will give further life to PEP and it will make it come alive for us in our daily work.

The journey of servant-leadership is well worth taking. I feel privileged to be able to go on this journey with you. Together, we have the potential to carve the workplace of our dreams. Let's dare to do it.

## Additional Resources

For those of you who may be interested in deepening your knowledge of servant-leadership, type in the words Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership and you will be able to access many valuable resources like articles, newsletters, books and conferences through this valuable web site.

## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Spears, Larry, The Understanding and Practice of Servant-Leadership, The International Journal of Servant-Leadership. Gonzaga University-Greenleaf Centre of Servant-Leadership, Vol. 1 2005, Number 1 p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> Spears, Larry, Lawrence, Michele (Ed. ), Practicing Servant Leadership, Succeeding Through Trust, Bravery, and Forgiveness. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2004. p. 135.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. pp. 135-136.

<sup>6</sup> Spears, Larry, Lawrence, Michele (Ed. ), focus on Leadership. The Greenleaf Centre for Servant-leadership, Wiley & sons, New York, 2002. p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Spears, Larry, Lawrence, Michele (Ed.), Practicing Servant Leadership. P. 80.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 80.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 80.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 150.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid p. 151.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 151.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 154.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 154.

<sup>15</sup> . Senge, Peter M. The Fifth Discipline. New York: Doubleday, 1990. p. 144.

<sup>16</sup> Arnold, William and Plas Jeanne, the Human Touch. New York: John Riley and Sons, 1993 p. 152.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 50