

Servant Leadership: What Makes Great Leaders and What Makes Leaders Great

Big Idea: *People who want to be great leaders must embrace an attitude of service to others.*

What is leadership? Ask a dozen people and chances are you'll get a dozen different definitions. But one thing is true: *everything rises and falls on leadership!* It's true in business. It's true in the church. I just finished reading Ken Blanchard's new book, *The Secret: What Great Leaders Know and Do*. We're taking our Church Planters through this book over the next few months, teaching them the leadership principles they must learn in order to be effective.

The primary concept of the book is that regardless of their formal title or position, people who want to be great leaders must embrace an attitude of service to others. Leaders can find countless ways to serve the people they lead, and they should always be on the lookout for new and different ways to do this. However, there are at least five critical ways leaders must serve if they want to be as effective as possible. For memory's sake, the first letter of each of these five critical points spells out the word S-E-R-V-E.

First, they must be willing to **See the future**. They must help the people they lead see the destination as well as the advantages of going there. Everybody needs to see who they are, where they are going, and what will guide their journey.

Second, they must **Engage and develop others**. The first key element here is to recruit and select the right people for the right job. That means to bet the right players on the team. The second element is to do whatever it takes to engage the hearts *and* the heads of the people you lead. Historically, many leaders have employed the hands and nothing else. That's probably where the term "hired hand" comes from. We must get much more from people than just their hands. We must engage their hearts and heads as well.

Third, leaders must **Reinvent continuously**. This is where the value of creativity can really shine. The leader must be willing to re-invent on at least three levels. The first is personal. Some key questions to ask in this area are: *How am I learning and growing as a leader? What am I doing to encourage others to constantly learn and reinvent themselves?*

The second level of reinvention is that of systems and processes. We must ask ourselves and our people: *How are we doing the work? How can we do it better? How can we do it faster? How can we do it cheaper? What changes would enhance our ability to serve our customers and each other?*

Finally, the third level of reinvention involves the structure of the organization. A good question to ask here is *What structural changes do we need to make to be more efficient and effective?* Leaders must continually ask these types of questions in order to take themselves, their people, and their organization to the next level.

Fourth, the "v" stands for **Value results and relationships**. We value our customers first – and that value guides our behavior and ensures our continuing success.

What most people don't understand is they can get better financial results if they have good relationships with their customers and their fellow workers. We have to raise the value of "relationships" to a position of equal importance with our value for "results.": It's "both-and" not "either-or."

We traditionally teach people the important skills they need to get results: problem solving, decision making, and so on. What we have to continue working on is building good relationships and connection with people – while helping them continually to perform better. How do we do that? We value relationships when we listen to people, when we invest time with them, when we care deeply about them, and when we recognize their efforts.

Fifth, we must **Embody the values**. Embodying the values of our organization is fundamental – and ongoing. If we lose our credibility as leaders, our leadership potential will be greatly limited. We must do more than articulate the values, although that is very important. We must not only say it, we must show it. We've all heard that leaders must "*walk the walk.*" Far too many "*stumble the mumble*" when it comes to embodying organizational values consistently.

That's it. The "Secret" of Leadership is to S-E-R-V-E:

See the Future
Engage and Develop Others
Reinvent Continuously
Value Results and Relationships
Embody the Values

And the one who modeled that more effectively than anyone in history? The One who came, not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many. Jesus selected twelve ordinary, inexperienced people and developed them into leaders who could carry on after He was no longer there in bodily form.

When people asked Him questions, His answers showed a servant heart. "*How do you lead?*" "*By following.*" "*How can I be first?*" "*By being last.*"

He symbolized His whole philosophy of servant leadership at the Last Supper, where He washed the feet of the disciples and essentially told them, "*Just as I have done for you, you must do for others.*" He constantly was talking about the future. He engaged His followers. He was continually challenging people to change not only themselves but also each other and their organizations. He cared about both people and results. And He certainly embodied the values that He spoke.

Jesus is the greatest servant leader of all time. And we have a lot to learn. Each of us is in process. But be encouraged: as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "*Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve.*"