

FOREWORD BY JOHN C. MAXWELL

# SERVANT LEADERSHIP *in* ACTION

How You Can Achieve Great  
Relationships  
and Results

Edited by Ken & Renee  
Blanchard Broadwell

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SERVANT  
LEADERSHIP  
*in* ACTION

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How You Can Achieve Great  
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Edited by Ken Blanchard  
& Renee Broadwell



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*a BK Business book*

# Servant Leadership in Action

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This book is dedicated to all those who choose  
to serve rather than to be served.  
Keep up the good work!

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## Foreword by John C. Maxwell

WHEN KEN BLANCHARD asked me to write the foreword for this wonderful collection of essays about servant leadership, I was thrilled for several reasons. First of all, Ken and I are soul mates. We both have been studying, teaching, and writing about leadership for years. In the process, we have come to the conclusion that the only way to create great relationships and results is through servant leadership. It's all about putting other people first.

I get a kick when I hear people say "It's lonely at the top." To me, if it's lonely at the top, it means nobody is following you. If that's true, you'd better get off the top and go where the people are—and then, in my terms, bring them to the top with you.

Ken and I have laughed about how immature people are who think about themselves first. It's a selfish way to lead. That's okay when you are a small child; however, it's not okay when you're 35, 45, or 55, and you haven't yet figured out that it's not about you. We keep on reiterating that when you become a leader, you give up your right to think of yourself first. Servant leadership is about always putting others first.

This is a long-winded way of saying I love this book.

Besides my admiration for Ken, another reason I'm excited has to do with the quality of contributors he has gathered here. I can't think of many people I admire in our field whom Ken hasn't talked into participating. While they all have different perspectives, the result is some common themes that truly highlight the tenets of servant leadership in action—not just the principles of what servant leadership is. I must admit that a number of the essays grabbed at my heart and didn't let go. I know you'll also find several that particularly resonate with you.

I think you'll appreciate the way the book is organized into six parts, starting with the fundamentals and elements of servant leadership and ending with first-person accounts of putting servant leadership to work and how

it has dramatically changed organizations for the better. You'll also love Ken's personal introductions for each of the authors.

I'm so glad you have picked up this book. Read it, study it, read it again, and apply the wonderful lessons about the power of lifting others up—and, in the process, helping everyone win.

John C. Maxwell  
Bestselling author and leadership expert  
[www.johnmaxwell.com](http://www.johnmaxwell.com)

SERVANT  
LEADERSHIP  
*in* ACTION

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# Introduction

## *Serve First and Lead Second*

KEN BLANCHARD AND  
RENEE BROADWELL

THE WORLD IS in desperate need of a different leadership role model. We all have seen the negative impact of self-serving leaders in every sector of our society. Why is that? Because these leaders have been conditioned to think of leadership only in terms of power and control. We think there is a better choice: to lead at a higher level. When people lead at a higher level, they make the world a better place because in addition to results and relationships, their goals are focused on the greater good. This requires a special kind of leader: a *servant leader*.

Our desire to develop servant leaders who are world changers has driven us to produce this book—a carefully curated collection of essays. Here to share their passion about servant leadership are some of Ken’s very favorite people who are not only outstanding practitioners of servant leadership but also writers in the field. In addition to this introduction, throughout the book Ken will give short personal introductions to each of his colleagues’ essays.

Robert K. Greenleaf coined the term *servant leadership* in his essay titled “The Servant as Leader.”<sup>1</sup> He published widely on the concept for the next twenty years.<sup>2</sup> And yet it is an old concept. Two thousand years ago, servant leadership was central to the philosophy of Jesus, who exemplified the fully committed and effective servant leader. Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela are well-known modern examples of leaders who have exemplified this philosophy.

The book is organized into six parts. Part One, “Fundamentals of Servant Leadership,” includes essays that describe basic aspects of servant leadership. Part Two, “Elements of Servant Leadership,” highlights some of the different points of view of servant leaders. Part Three, “Lessons in Servant Leadership,” focuses on what people have learned on a personal level from observing servant leadership in action. Part Four, “Exemplars of Servant Leadership,” features people who have been identified as classic servant leaders. Part Five, “Putting Servant Leadership to Work,” offers firsthand accounts of people who have made servant leadership come alive in their organizations. Part Six, “Servant Leadership Turnarounds,” illustrates how servant leadership can dramatically impact both results and human satisfaction in organizations.

An important note: In the opening essay of Part Four, “Exemplars of Servant Leadership,” Ken and Phil Hodges identify Jesus as the greatest servant leadership role model of all time, an identification they first wrote about in their book *Lead Like Jesus*.<sup>3</sup> A number of Ken’s colleagues in their essays also refer to Jesus’s servant leadership example and to the Bible as an important leadership reference book. Why? Because it’s hard to deny Jesus’s influence, as a servant leader, on the world. Rest assured that our intention is not to try to convert anyone. In fact, a major goal of this book is to prove that servant leadership has application in both secular *and* spiritual leadership in every kind of organization, including businesses, government agencies, educational institutions, and places of worship.

Although we organize this book around six parts describing various aspects of servant leadership, we don’t want you to get discouraged or overwhelmed. Rather, we encourage you, as you read this book, to find four or five essays that really speak to your heart and motivate you to say “As a leader I want to serve rather than be served.”

The audience for this book is wide. It’s for anyone in a leadership position—from a frontline supervisor to the CEO of a company. In fact, every person who serves as a leader in a secular or nonsecular capacity could benefit from reading and practicing the leadership concepts from the essays in this book.

Our dream is that someday, everywhere, everyone will be impacted by someone who is a servant leader. Self-serving leaders will be a thing of the past. Leaders throughout the world will be people who, in Robert K. Greenleaf’s terms, “serve first and lead second.” We have created this book to help make that dream a reality. It’s our hope and desire that reading *Servant Leadership in Action* will either confirm what you already are doing or be the beginning of a new and exciting chapter in your personal leadership journey.

We want this to be the book you refer to when you are interested in how to actually practice servant leadership in your life and work—how to get beyond the theory and philosophy to daily action. We believe you, too, can be a servant leader who makes a positive difference in the world.

Join us in our quest. We are counting on you.

Ken Blanchard, coauthor of *The New One Minute Manager*, *Leading at a Higher Level*, and *Lead Like Jesus Revisited* and cofounder of The Ken Blanchard Companies and Lead Like Jesus

Renee Broadwell, senior editor, The Ken Blanchard Companies

## Notes

1. Robert K. Greenleaf, “The Servant as Leader” (Atlanta: The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, 1970).
2. A collection of Greenleaf’s most mature writings on the subject can be found in *The Power of Servant Leadership* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1998). The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership ([www.greenleaf.org](http://www.greenleaf.org)) is a resource for all of Greenleaf’s work.
3. Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus: Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005).

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## Part One

# Fundamentals of Servant Leadership

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### Descriptions of Basic Aspects of Servant Leadership

- Ken Blanchard covers his leadership philosophy in “What Is Servant Leadership?” by emphasizing the two parts of servant leadership: the *leadership/strategic* aspect and the *servant/operational* aspect.
- Larry C. Spears, inspired by his mentor and pioneer in the field of servant leadership Robert K. Greenleaf, discusses “Characteristics of Servant Leaders.”
- Raj Sisodia, cofounder of the Conscious Capitalism movement, shows in “Servant Leadership Is Conscious Leadership” how the qualities of *servant* leaders overlap considerably with those of *conscious* leaders.
- Stephen M. R. Covey, in “Servant Leadership at the Speed of Trust,” reflects on how trust is inextricably linked to the practice of servant leadership.
- Mark Miller, in “Great Leaders SERVE,” relates how the SERVE acronym developed at Chick-fil-A can help you become a servant leader.
- Mark A. Floyd offers advice to new servant leaders in his essay “Servant Leadership: What Does It Really Mean?”
- Michael C. Bush, CEO of Great Places to Work For All, shows that the most extraordinary organizations are led by servant leaders in “Servant Leaders Create a Great Place to Work for All.”

- Holly Culhane, in “The Leader as Shepherd,” presents a compelling argument that the shepherd is one of the best examples of a servant leader.
- Simon Sinek, in “The Evolution of Servant Leadership,” shares his thoughts about the roots of servant leadership—and why it matters.

# Chapter 1

## What Is Servant Leadership?

KEN BLANCHARD

*Okay, let's get started. As Julie Andrews sang in The Sound of Music, "Let's start at the very beginning. . . ." What is servant leadership all about? In this essay, I'll give you my thoughts. —KB*

WHEN PEOPLE HEAR the phrase *servant leadership*, they are often confused. Their assumption is that it means managers should be working for their people, who would decide what to do, when to do it, where to do it, and how to do it. If that's what servant leadership is all about, it doesn't sound like leadership to them at all. It sounds more like the inmates running the prison, or trying to please everyone.

The problem is that these folks don't understand leadership—much less servant leadership.<sup>1</sup> They think you can't lead and serve at the same time. Yet you can, if you understand that there are two parts to servant leadership:

- a visionary/direction, or strategic, role—the *leadership* aspect of servant leadership; and
- an implementation, or operational, role—the *servant* aspect of servant leadership.

Some people say that leadership is really the visionary/direction role—doing the right thing—and management is the implementation role—doing things right. Rather than getting caught in the leadership vs. management debate, let's think of these *both* as leadership roles.

In this book, we focus on leadership as an influence process in which you try to help people accomplish goals. All good leadership starts with a visionary role, as Jesse Stoner and I explain in our book *Full Steam Ahead!*<sup>2</sup> This involves not only goal setting, but also establishing a compelling vision that

tells you who you are (your purpose), where you're going (your picture of the future), and what will guide your journey (your values). In other words, leadership starts with a sense of direction.

I love the saying “a river without banks is a large puddle.”<sup>3</sup> The banks permit the river to flow; they give direction to the river. Leadership is about going somewhere; it's not about wandering around aimlessly. If people don't have a compelling vision to serve, the only thing they have to serve is their own self-interest.

Walt Disney started his theme parks with a clear purpose. He said, “We're in the happiness business.” That is very different from being in the theme park business. Being in the happiness business helps cast members (employees) understand their primary role in the company.

When it comes to a purpose statement, too many organizations, if they have one, make it too complicated. I'll never forget talking to all of the key managers of a major bank. Prior to my speech, I asked them to send me their purpose statement if they had one, which they did. When I got up in front of the group, I told them how much I appreciated their sending me their purpose statement. “Ever since I got it, I've slept so much better. Why? Because I put it next to my bed and if I couldn't sleep at night I would read it.” The purpose statement droned on and on. I said, “If I were working with you, I would hope you would say ‘We are in the financial peace of mind business—if people give us money, we will protect it and even grow it.’” Everyone laughed because they knew that would be something that all their people could easily share and follow.

Once you have a clear purpose that tells you who you are, you need to develop a picture of the future so that everyone knows where you are going. Walt Disney's picture of the future was expressed in the charge he gave every cast member: “Keep the same smile on people's faces when they leave the park as when they entered.” Disney didn't care whether a guest was in the park two hours or ten hours. He just wanted to keep them smiling. After all, they were in the happiness business. Your picture of the future should focus on the end results.

The final aspect of a compelling vision involves your values, which are there to guide your journey. Values provide guidelines for how you should proceed as you pursue your purpose and picture of the future. They answer the questions “What do I want to live by?” and “How?” They need to be clearly described so that you know exactly what behaviors demonstrate those values as being lived.

The Disney theme parks have four rank-ordered values: safety, courtesy, the show, and efficiency. Why is safety the highest ranked value? Walt Disney knew that if a guest were to be carried out of one of his parks on a stretcher, that person would not have the same smile on their face leaving the park that they had when they entered.

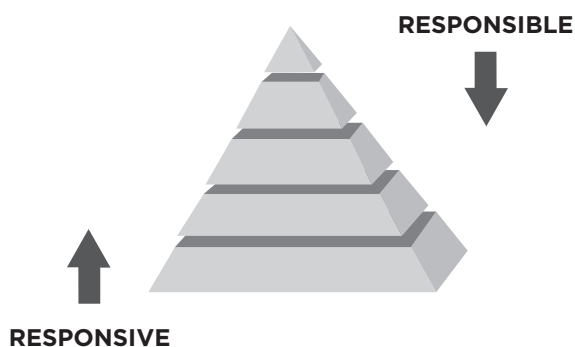
The second-ranked value, courtesy, is all about the friendly attitude you expect at a Disney theme park. Why is it important to know that it's the number-two value? Suppose one of the Disney cast members is answering a guest question in a friendly, courteous manner, and he hears a scream that's not coming from a roller coaster. If that cast member wants to act according to the park's rank-ordered values, he will excuse himself as quickly and politely as possible and race toward the scream. Why? Because the number-one value just called. If the values were not rank-ordered and the cast member was enjoying the interaction with the guest, he might say, "They're always yelling at the park," and not move in the direction of the scream. Later, somebody could come to that cast member and say, "You were the closest to the scream. Why didn't you move?" The response could be, "I was dealing with our courtesy value."

Life is a series of value conflicts. There will be times when you can't act on two values at the same time. I have a hunch that's why Walt Disney put efficiency—running a profitable business—as the fourth-ranked value. He wanted to make clear they would do nothing to save money that would put people in danger, nor do a major downsizing in the park that impacted in a negative way their courtesy value.

Once an organization has a compelling vision, they can set goals and define strategic initiatives that suggest what people should be focusing on right now. With a compelling vision, these goals and strategic initiatives take on more meaning and therefore are not seen as a threat, but as part of the bigger picture.

The traditional hierarchical pyramid (see Figure 1.1) is effective for the *leadership* aspect of servant leadership. Kids look to their parents, players look to their coaches, and people look to their organizational leaders for vision and direction. While these leaders should involve experienced people in shaping direction, the ultimate responsibility remains with the leaders themselves and cannot be delegated to others.

Once people are clear on where they are going, the leader's role shifts to a service mindset for the task of implementation—the second aspect of servant leadership. The question now is: How do we live according to the vision



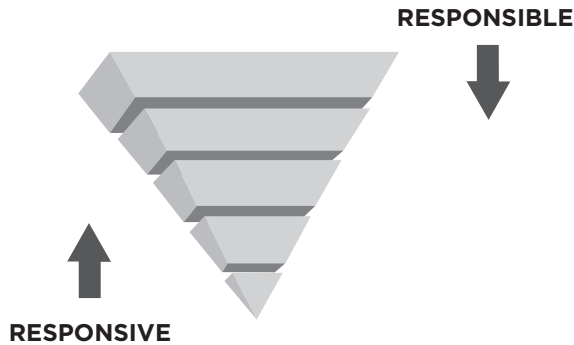
**Figure 1.1** Visionary/leadership role

and accomplish the established goals? Implementation is where the *servant* aspect of servant leadership comes into play.

Most organizations and leaders get into trouble in the implementation phase of the leadership process. With self-serving leaders at the helm, the traditional hierarchical pyramid is kept alive and well. When that happens, who do people think they work for? The people above them. The minute you think you work for the person above you for implementation, you are assuming that person—your boss—is *responsible* and your job is being *responsive* to that boss and to his or her whims or wishes. Now “boss watching” becomes a popular sport and people get promoted on their upward-influencing skills. As a result, all the energy of the organization is moving up the hierarchy, away from customers and the frontline folks who are closest to the action. What you get is a duck pond. When there is a conflict between what the customers want and what the boss wants, the boss wins. You have people quacking like ducks: “It’s our policy.” “I just work here.” “Would you like me to get my supervisor?” Servant leaders know how to correct this situation by philosophically turning the traditional hierarchical pyramid upside down when it comes to implementation (see Figure 1.2).

When that happens, who is at the top of the organization? The customer contact people. Who is *really* at the top of the organization? The customers. Who is at the bottom now? The “top” management. As a result, who works for whom when it comes to implementation? You, the leader, work for your people. This one change, although it seems minor, makes a major difference. The difference is between who is *responsible* and who is *responsive*.

When you turn the organizational pyramid upside down, rather than your people being responsive to you, they become responsible—able to



**Figure 1.2** Implementation/servant role

respond—and your job as the leader/manager is to be responsive to your people. This creates a very different environment for implementation. If you work for your people as servant leaders do, what is the purpose of being a manager? To help your people become eagles rather than ducks and soar above the crowd—accomplishing goals, solving problems, and living according to the vision.<sup>4</sup>

As a customer, you can always tell an organization that is run by a self-serving leader. Why? Because if you have a problem and go to a frontline customer contact person to solve it, you are talking to a duck. They say, “It’s our policy,” quack quack; “I didn’t make the rules,” quack quack; “Do you want to talk to my supervisor?” quack quack.

Several years ago, a friend of mine had an experience in a department store that illustrates this point well. While shopping, he realized he needed to talk to his wife but he had left his cell phone at home. He asked a salesperson in the men’s department if he could use the telephone.

“No,” the salesperson said.

My friend replied, “You have to be kidding me. I can always use the phone at Nordstrom.”

The salesperson said, “Look, buddy, they don’t let *me* use the phone here. Why should I let *you*?”

That certainly isn’t what servant leadership is all about. Who do you think that salesperson worked for—a duck or an eagle? Obviously, a supervisory duck. Who does that duck work for? Another duck, who works for another duck. And who sits at the top of the organization? The head mallard—a great big duck. If the salesperson had worked for an eagle, both he and the customer would have been able to use the phone!

Now contrast that with the eagle experience one of my colleagues had when he went to Nordstrom one day to get some perfume for his wife. The woman behind the counter said, “I’m sorry; we don’t sell that perfume in our store. But I know where I can get it in the mall. How long will you be in our store?”

“About 30 minutes,” my colleague said.

“Fine. I’ll go get it, bring it back, gift wrap it, and have it ready for you when you leave.”

This woman left Nordstrom, went to another store, got the perfume my colleague wanted, came back to Nordstrom, and gift wrapped it. You know what she charged him? The same price she had paid at the other store. So Nordstrom didn’t make any money on the deal, but what did they make? A raving fan customer.

To me, servant leadership is the only way to guarantee great relationships and results. That became even clearer to me when I realized that the two leadership approaches I am best known for around the world—The One Minute Manager® and Situational Leadership® II (SLII®)—are both examples of servant leadership in action.

After all, what’s the First Secret of The One Minute Manager? One Minute Goals. All good performance starts with clear goals—which is clearly part of the *leadership* aspect of servant leadership. Once people are clear on goals, an effective One Minute Manager wanders around and tries to catch people doing something right so that they can deliver a One Minute Praising—the Second Secret. If the person is doing something wrong or not performing as well as agreed upon, a One Minute Re-Direct is appropriate—the Third Secret. When effective One Minute Managers deliver praisings and re-directs, they are engaging in the *servant* aspect of servant leadership—they are working for their people to help them win—accomplish their goals.<sup>5</sup>

Situational Leadership® II<sup>6</sup> also has three aspects that generate both great relationships and results: goal setting, diagnosis, and matching. Once clear goals are set, an effective SLII leader works with their direct report to diagnose the direct report’s development level—competence and commitment—on each specific goal. Together they then determine the appropriate leadership style—the amount of directive and supportive behavior—that will match the person’s development level on each goal so that the manager can help them accomplish their goals. The key here, in the *servant* aspect of servant leadership, is for managers to remember they must use different strokes for different folks and also different strokes for the same folks, depending on the goal and the person’s development level.



Why are the concepts of The One Minute Manager and SLII so widely used around the world? I think it's because they are clear examples of servant leadership in action. Both concepts recognize that vision and direction—the *leadership* aspect of servant leadership—is the responsibility of the traditional hierarchy. The *servant* aspect of servant leadership is all about turning the hierarchy upside down and helping everyone throughout the organization develop great relationships, get great results, and, eventually, delight their customers. That's what servant leadership is all about.

## Notes

1. Ken Blanchard et al., *Leading at a Higher Level* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT Press, 2006, 2010). See chapter 14 for a more extensive discussion of what servant leadership is all about.
2. See Ken Blanchard and Jesse Stoner, *Full Steam Ahead: Unleash the Power of Vision in Your Company and Your Life* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2003, 2011) for more about the visionary role of leadership.
3. This expression was coined by Alan Randolph. See Ken Blanchard, John Carlos, and Alan Randolph, *Empowerment Takes More Than a Minute* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1996).
4. Ken first heard this distinction between ducks and eagles from author and legendary personal growth guru Wayne Dyer.
5. Ken Blanchard and Spencer Johnson, *The One Minute Manager* (New York: William Morrow, 1982, 2003). See also their *The New One Minute Manager* (New York: William Morrow, 2015).
6. Ken Blanchard first developed Situational Leadership® with Paul Hersey in the late 1960s. It was in the early 1980s that Ken and founding associates of The Ken Blanchard Companies—Margie Blanchard, Don Carew, Eunice Parisi-Carew, Fred Finch, Laurie Hawkins, Drea Zigarmi, and Patricia Zigarmi—created Situational Leadership® II. The best description of this thinking can be found in Ken Blanchard, Patricia Zigarmi, and Drea Zigarmi, *Leadership and the One Minute Manager* (New York: William Morrow, 1985, 2013).

## Chapter 2

# Characteristics of Servant Leaders

LARRY C. SPEARS

*In the late 1960s, I had the privilege of spending the weekend with Robert K. Greenleaf shortly after he retired from AT&T and began writing about servant leadership. I was on the faculty of Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, at the time. Several years later I got to know Larry Spears, who, during his time as director of the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, became the premier student of Greenleaf's writings. When you read Larry's essay about the ten characteristics of a servant leader, you will see why his participation in this book was a must. —KB*

THE WORDS *SERVANT* and *leader* are usually thought of as being opposites. In deliberately bringing those words together in a meaningful way in 1970, Robert K. Greenleaf, a retired AT&T executive, gave birth to the paradoxical term *servant leadership*. In doing so, he launched a quiet revolution in the way in which we view and practice leadership. In the decades since then, many of today's most effective managers and top thought leaders are writing and speaking about servant leadership, as exemplified in this book.

What is servant leadership? Let's take a look at Greenleaf's big picture definition:

The servant leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: 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?<sup>1</sup>

## Ten Characteristics of a Servant Leader

Back in 1992, I extracted from Robert K. Greenleaf's writings a set of ten characteristics of the servant leader, which I view as being of critical importance and central to the development of servant leaders. In the decades since that time, part of my own work in servant leadership has focused on encouraging a deepening understanding of the following characteristics and how they contribute to the meaningful practices of servant leaders. These ten characteristics are:

1. *Listening.* Leaders traditionally have been valued for their communication and decision-making skills. Although these are also important skills for the servant leader, they need to be reinforced by a deep commitment to listening intently to others. The servant leader seeks to identify the will of a group and helps to clarify that will. He or she listens receptively to what is being said and not said. Listening also encompasses hearing one's own inner voice. Listening, coupled with periods of reflection, is essential to the growth and well-being of the servant leader.
2. *Empathy.* The servant leader strives to understand and empathize with others. People deserve to be accepted and recognized for their special and unique spirits. One assumes the good intentions of coworkers and colleagues and does not reject them as people, even when one may be forced to refuse to accept certain behaviors or performance. The most successful servant leaders are those who have become skilled empathetic listeners.
3. *Healing.* The healing of relationships is a powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of servant leadership is the potential for healing one's self and one's relationship to others. Many people have broken spirits and have suffered from a variety of emotional hurts. Although this is a part of being human, servant leaders recognize that they have an opportunity *to help make whole* those with whom they come in contact. In his essay "The Servant as Leader," 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>2</sup>

4. *Awareness.* General awareness, and especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant leader. Awareness helps one in understanding issues involving ethics, power, and values. It lends itself to being able to view most situations from a more integrated, holistic position. As Greenleaf observes, “Awareness is not a giver of solace—it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener. Able leaders are usually sharply awake and reasonably disturbed. They are not seekers after solace. They have their own inner serenity.”<sup>3</sup>
5. *Persuasion.* Another characteristic of servant leaders is reliance on persuasion, rather than on one’s positional authority, in making decisions within an organization. The servant leader seeks to convince others, rather than coerce compliance. This particular element offers one of the clearest distinctions between the traditional authoritarian model and that of servant leadership. The servant leader is effective at building consensus within groups. This emphasis on persuasion over coercion finds its roots in the beliefs of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)—the denominational body to which Robert K. Greenleaf belonged.
6. *Conceptualization.* Servant leaders seek to nurture their abilities to *dream great dreams*. The ability to look at a problem or an organization from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities. For many leaders, this is a characteristic that requires discipline and practice. The traditional leader is consumed by the need to achieve short-term operational goals. The leader who wishes also to be a servant leader must stretch his or her thinking to encompass broader-based conceptual thinking. Within organizations, conceptualization is, by its very nature, a key role of boards of trustees or directors. Unfortunately, boards can sometimes become involved in the day-to-day operations—something that should always be discouraged—and thus fail to provide the visionary concept for an institution. Trustees need to be mostly conceptual in their orientation; staffs need to be mostly operational in their perspective; and the most effective executive leaders probably need to develop both perspectives within themselves. Servant leaders are called to seek a delicate balance between conceptual thinking and a day-to-day operational approach.

7. *Foresight*. Closely related to conceptualization, the ability to foresee the likely outcome of a situation is hard to define but easier to identify. One knows foresight when one experiences it. Foresight is a characteristic that enables the servant leader to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision for the future. It is also deeply rooted within the intuitive mind. Foresight remains a largely unexplored area in leadership studies, but it is one most deserving of careful attention.
8. *Stewardship*. Peter Block, author of *Stewardship* and *The Empowered Manager*,<sup>4</sup> defines stewardship as “holding something in trust for another.” Robert K. Greenleaf’s view of all institutions was one in which CEOs, staffs, and trustees all played significant roles in holding their institutions in trust for the greater good of society. Servant leadership, like stewardship, assumes a commitment to serving the needs of others. It also emphasizes the use of openness and persuasion rather than control.
9. *Commitment to the growth of people*. Servant leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. As such, the servant leader is deeply committed to the growth of each individual within his or her organization. The servant leader recognizes the tremendous responsibility to do everything in his or her power to nurture the personal and professional growth of employees and colleagues. In practice, this can include concrete actions such as making funds available for personal and professional development, taking a personal interest in the ideas and suggestions from everyone, encouraging worker involvement in decision making, and actively assisting laid-off employees to find other positions.
10. *Building community*. The servant leader senses that much has been lost in recent human history as a result of the shift from local communities to large institutions as the primary shaper of human lives. This awareness causes the servant leader to seek to identify some means for building community among those who work within a given institution. Servant leadership suggests that true community can be created among those who work in businesses and other institutions. Greenleaf said, “All that is needed to rebuild community as a viable life form for large numbers of people is for enough servant leaders to show the way, not by mass movements, but by each servant leader demonstrating his or her unlimited liability for a quite specific community-related group.”<sup>5</sup>

These ten characteristics of servant leadership are by no means exhaustive. However, they do serve to communicate the power and promise that this concept offers to those who are open to its invitation and challenge.

We are experiencing a rapid shift in many businesses and not-for-profit organizations—away from the more traditional autocratic and hierarchical models of leadership and toward servant leadership as a way of being in relationship with others. Interest in the meaning and practice of servant leadership continues to grow. Many books, articles, and papers on the subject have now been published. Workshops, courses, and degrees in servant leadership are now available. Many of the companies named to *Fortune* magazine's annual listing of "The 100 Best Companies to Work For" espouse servant leadership and have integrated it into their corporate cultures. My own work in servant leadership over the past quarter century has brought me into direct or indirect contact with millions of people who embrace servant leadership, and who are now working to create servant-led organizations of all kinds.

Servant leadership characteristics often occur naturally within many individuals and, like many natural tendencies, they can be enhanced through learning and practice. Servant leadership offers great hope for the future in creating better, more caring, institutions.

*Larry C. Spears, a noted author and speaker on servant leadership, is president and CEO of the Spears Center for Servant Leadership ([www.spearscenter.org](http://www.spearscenter.org)) and also serves as servant leadership scholar at Gonzaga University. From 1990 to 2007, Larry was president and CEO of the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership. He is the editor and contributing author of more than a dozen books on servant leadership including Insights on Leadership, as well as editor of five books of Greenleaf's writings.*

## Notes

1. Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977).
2. Robert K. Greenleaf, "The Servant as Leader" (Atlanta: The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, 1970).
3. Ibid.
4. Peter Block, *The Empowered Manager: Positive Political Skills at Work* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), and *Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self Interest* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993).
5. Greenleaf, "The Servant as Leader."

## Chapter 3

# Servant Leadership Is Conscious Leadership

RAJ SISODIA

*When I shared the platform a few years ago with Raj Sisodia, I was amazed how complementary his thinking about Conscious Capitalism was with my beliefs about servant leadership—in essence, that profit is the applause you get for creating a motivating environment for your people so that they will take care of your customers. Read this essay and see how well Conscious Capitalism fits in with the beliefs on servant leadership that Larry Spears and I have shared. —KB*

THE INSTITUTION OF business, as practiced in a system of free market capitalism, has been the prime driver in elevating human prosperity and flourishing to unprecedented heights for more than two hundred years. These huge gains in material prosperity have come at a cost, however. People are experiencing extremely high levels of stress, depression, and chronic diseases.

How is this state of affairs acceptable? We are more intelligent, more educated, better informed, more connected, more caring, less violent, and more conscious than ever before. Yet our work continues to be a source of deep suffering for most of us. In large measure, we can place the blame on poor leadership.

Leaders are products of the systems that give rise to them. The existing system has elevated people into positions of leadership who lack the qualities needed to lead in today's world. These people do whatever it takes to deliver the numbers without regard to human cost or long-term consequences for organizational health.

The consciousness with which a business operates is a direct function of the consciousness of its leader. A leader whose consciousness is rooted in fear, scarcity, and survival will create an organization that is all about those qualities.

But there is a new way of doing business that is radically different. Actually, it is not new at all—companies have been operating this way for over a century. These *conscious capitalist* organizations have four defining characteristics:

1. They operate with a purpose other than profit maximization as their reason for being.
2. They seek to create value for all their stakeholders, not just shareholders.
3. Their leaders are motivated by service to the company's purpose and its people, not by power or personal enrichment.
4. They strive to build cultures infused with trust, openness, and caring instead of fear and stress.

In the long run, our research shows that such companies generate far more financial wealth than do traditional profit-centered firms—outperforming the S&P 500 index by 14 to 1 and the companies featured in Jim Collins's *Good to Great* by 6 to 1 over a 15-year period.<sup>1</sup> Conscious businesses know that it is possible to do business with a spectrum of positive effects. And if it is possible, why would we choose not to?

You cannot have a conscious business without a conscious leader, and you cannot be a conscious leader without being a conscious human being. The qualities of *servant leaders* overlap considerably with those of *conscious leaders*. For the purposes of this essay, please consider the two terms interchangeable as we explore the characteristics of servant leaders/conscious leaders and how they can be cultivated.

## Conscious Leaders are SELFLESS

*Only three things happen naturally in organizations: friction, confusion, and underperformance. Everything else takes leadership.* —Peter Drucker

The essential elements of what it means to be a conscious leader can be captured in this single word, which also serves as an acronym: SELFLESS—



defined as placing the interests of others before your own. True leaders transcend the self. A leader who operates with a primary emphasis on self-interest naturally views other people as a means to that end. You cannot be a true leader if you operate at that level of consciousness.

Selfless does not mean eradicating the ego; that is nearly impossible. It is about harnessing the ego in healthy ways. As the Dalai Lama has said, “We cannot and need not eradicate our ego; rather, we must make sure it is a *serving* ego and not a *deserving* ego.”

As an acronym, SELFLESS refers to the qualities of conscious leaders: Strength, Enthusiasm, Love, Flexibility, Long-Term Orientation, Emotional Intelligence, Systems Intelligence, and Spiritual Intelligence. The servant leader is a whole person, not a fragmented being. SELFLESS reflects a harmonious blend of mature masculine and mature feminine qualities. Too many leaders today manifest only immature hypermasculine qualities such as domination, aggression, hypercompetitiveness, winning at all costs, etc. They view every leadership challenge through the lens of war—a mindset that is at best win-lose, and usually lose-lose. Let’s take a closer look at what each letter of the SELFLESS acronym stands for.

### ***Strength***

We start with strength because conscious leaders are strong, resolute, and resilient. They have to have moral fiber, self-confidence, and the courage of their convictions. They are unshakable in standing up to doubters or obstructionists with self-serving agendas. They are confident without being arrogant. The key is that their strength is deployed in the service of noble ends: the flourishing of all the lives they lead and touch. This strength is sourced from within as well as from outside.

Conscious leaders draw on the strength of their teams without depleting the power of those teams. They tap into the moral power of the universe—which is available to anyone engaged in genuinely “right” action. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. famously said, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” Leaders who try to bend that arc in other directions will find their efforts ultimately stymied, while those who engage in right actions and pursue noble goals can access unlimited righteous power. It is power *with*, not power *over*, those they seek to lead. For leaders to be powerful, followers don’t have to be rendered powerless. Collectively, they have access to all the power they need by being connected to the source of infinite power.

## ***Enthusiasm***

Conscious leaders are connected to an infinite source of power because of their commitment to a higher purpose and a righteous path. This power gives them great energy and enthusiasm. This doesn't mean that they have to be gregarious extroverts. Introverts make exceptional leaders, as many studies have found. But when you're aligned with your purpose, you can't help but be enthusiastic. That is hard to fake if you don't have it.

## ***Love***

A fundamental leadership quality is the ability to operate from love and care. Throughout human history, the great leaders who transformed society for the better—Emperor Ashoka, Lincoln, Gandhi, Mandela, and King—all possessed tremendous strength along with a powerful capacity for caring. They were able to expand their circle of caring to encompass more and more of humanity—often including their own so-called enemies. They truly, deeply cared about human beings and had a clear sense of right and wrong. Truly great leaders are those who take the world to a better place. They manifest love that is rooted in a foundation of caring. When a leader comes from a place of genuine caring and possesses great strength, they become a peaceful warrior, able to battle steep odds for a just and righteous cause.

The opposite of love is fear. An organization suffused with fear is inherently incapable of genuine creativity and innovation. Its people are condemned to daily lives of intense stress, unhappiness, ill health, and dysfunctional families. Conscious leaders seek to drive fear out of their organizations. As Simon Sinek, author of *Start with Why* and *Leaders Eat Last*,<sup>2</sup> says, they create a “circle of safety” within which everyone in the organizational family can grow and thrive.

## ***Flexibility***

Flexibility is the capacity to switch modes seamlessly and to bend without breaking as the situation or the context requires. Conscious leaders are like golfers with a full set of clubs; they know how to select and implement the right approach for each situation. These leaders are able to bend but not break, adapting to circumstances in a principled way without sacrificing their core values.

A phrase that captures the idea of flexibility states that conscious leaders are “wise fools of tough love.” They simultaneously embody wisdom and playfulness, strength and tenderness. They cultivate a sensitive sonar that enables them to gauge the approach needed in each leadership moment.

### ***Long-Term Orientation***

Conscious leaders operate on a time horizon that goes beyond not only their tenure as leaders but also their own lifetimes. The Founding Fathers of the United States led with an eye toward eternity, seeking to put in place ideas and principles that would endure for centuries if not millennia. Organizations have the potential to be immortal. Whether they endure depends on the actions of their leaders.

The success of a leader is best gauged by what happens after they are gone. Does the organization continue to operate with high principles and moral clarity? Jim Collins and Jerry Porras, in their book *Built to Last*,<sup>3</sup> wrote about leaders who are “clock builders” vs. those who are “time tellers.” Clock builders create organizations that will endure when they are gone, because no one is reliant on them to tell the time. Conscious leaders ensure that the essential elements of what makes the business special become part of the DNA of the organization. They often accomplish this by creating documents akin to the U.S. Declaration of Independence—who we are and what we stand for; and the Constitution—how we do things.

### ***Emotional Intelligence***

For leaders, a high level of analytical intelligence (IQ) is a given. In the past, most companies only valued that. Today, other forms of intelligence are even more important—in particular, emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and systems intelligence. The great news is that while our analytical intelligence is fixed at birth and can only decline, other kinds of intelligence can be cultivated and enhanced.

Emotional intelligence (EQ) combines self-awareness (understanding oneself) and empathy (the ability to feel and understand what others are feeling). High EQ is increasingly being recognized as important in organizations because of the growing complexity of society and the variety of stakeholders that must be communicated with effectively. Unfortunately, research shows that the higher the position in the organization, the lower the level of EQ, with the CEO typically having the lowest level.<sup>4</sup>

Growing our self-awareness is a continuous process that lasts a lifetime—an entire universe is within us, waiting to be discovered. We learn about ourselves by becoming aware of our emotions and understanding why we’re experiencing them. Each emotion is a window into who we are and what we care about, often at a subconscious level. As Carl Jung said, “Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.”

### ***Systems Intelligence***

Systems intelligence (SYQ) is an intelligence many societies don’t yet recognize, understand, or cultivate. Yet in the twenty-first century, as organizations become more complex and the world becomes increasingly interdependent, it’s hard to overstate how valuable this type of intelligence is.

Systems thinking focuses on the way that a system’s constituent parts interrelate and how systems work over time and within the context of larger systems. Systems thinking contrasts sharply with symptomatic thinking, which causes us to constantly react to surface-level symptoms rather than understand the underlying processes that are giving rise to those symptoms.

Conscious leaders work to become natural systems thinkers. They understand the roots of problems and how the problems relate to organizational design and culture, and they devise fundamental solutions instead of applying symptomatic quick fixes. As Winston Churchill said, “We shape our buildings, and then our buildings shape us.” The same can be said of systems.

### ***Spiritual Intelligence***

According to Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall, “Spiritual intelligence (SQ) is the intelligence with which we access our deepest meanings, values, purposes, and higher motivations. It is . . . our moral intelligence, giving us an innate ability to distinguish right from wrong. It is the intelligence with which we exercise goodness, truth, beauty, and compassion in our lives.”<sup>5</sup> SQ helps us to discover our higher purpose in our work and our lives. Leaders with high SQ have a remarkable ability to align their organizations with a higher purpose. They also have uncanny discernment to sense when things are beginning to go off track.

Servant leadership matters now more than ever. The human seed has never been more potent, powerful, or filled with promise. But even the best seed,

in order to flourish, needs the right soil: conditions that enable us to realize our extraordinary, almost divine, potential. In the organizational context, that means having the right kind of leadership that gives rise to a culture in which people can flourish. But if met with toxic leadership that seeks only to use and exploit precious human lives, that same seed can wither away, or worse, mutate into a malignant force and spread further pain and suffering in the world. Our great collective calling in the world today is to enhance joy. That takes leaders with great hearts and great courage who seek only to serve, to imagine a better future, and to devise ways in which we can realize it together.

*A global thought leader of the Conscious Capitalism movement, Raj Sisodia ([www.rajsisodia.com](http://www.rajsisodia.com)) is the Franklin Olin Distinguished Professor of Global Business and Whole Foods Market Research Scholar in Conscious Capitalism at Babson College. He is also cofounder and cochairman of Conscious Capitalism, Inc. Raj has an MBA from the Bajaj Institute of Management Studies in Bombay and a PhD in marketing from Columbia University. He is coauthor of the bestselling book *Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business*.*

## Notes

1. Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2001).
2. Simon Sinek, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (New York: Penguin, 2009). See also his *Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't* (New York: Penguin, 2014).
3. Jim Collins and Jerry I. Porras, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1994).
4. Travis Bradberry and Jeanne Greaves, "Heartless Bosses?," *Harvard Business Review* (December 2005).
5. Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall, *Spiritual Capital: Wealth We Can Live By* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2004).

## Chapter 4

# Servant Leadership at the Speed of Trust

STEPHEN M. R. COVEY

*I met Stephen R. Covey in 1976. Over time, we spoke at many of the same sessions and became great supporters of each other's work. When Steve passed away a few years ago, I was sad our field had lost such an important voice. Little did I know then that his son, Stephen M. R. Covey, with whom I have shared the platform many times since, would take up the banner and even go beyond where his father had journeyed. You'll understand what I'm saying after you read this wonderful essay about the role of trust in being an effective servant leader. —KB*

THERE IS AN intuition that I've had for a long time now. As a student of Robert K. Greenleaf's principles of servant leadership, I felt that intuition grow as I developed my original manuscript for *The Speed of Trust*,<sup>1</sup> and grow ever stronger as Greg Link and I followed it with *Smart Trust*.<sup>2</sup> I became increasingly convinced that the practices of servant leadership and trust are inextricably linked. Today I find it difficult to talk about serving without also talking about trust—and vice versa.

Consider this contrast: both servant leadership and trust-based leadership stand in opposition to traditional positional leadership, which is steeped in the language of control: "You have to do what I say because I'm the boss."

On the other hand, servant leaders and trust-based leaders alike draw from a deeper well of meaning. They serve first and they extend trust first. Leadership is the by-product and positional authority is, at best, an afterthought.

Given the link between servant leadership and trust, which comes first? Is one driven by the other? For the leader who seeks to lead their organization into the stratosphere of success, how should these two disciplines be balanced? Here are five key insights that have become clear to me.

1. The defining outcome for the servant leader is trust.

How do you know if you are a servant leader? The answer is trust. Trust is the litmus test. Trust is to servant leadership what profit is to a business. It's the outcome. It's the core measure. The scoreboard.

It's a simple assessment you can conduct right now. Pause for a moment to think about the people you lead. *What is the level—and quality—of trust?* If you are an authentic servant leader, you have enormous trust. But if you are surrounded by low or damaged trust, then you may safely conclude that your servant orientation is in some way compromised or diluted.

If you lead as a servant, you'll know it—because you will be surrounded by high-trust relationships and a high-trust team. And your company will reap the dividends of a high-trust organization. It's that simple.

2. The clear intent of the servant leader is to serve others.

Trust and servant leadership share another similarity in that both are built on intent. Intent—your motive, your agenda—may be intangible and invisible. But don't think for a moment that it is hidden. People sense your intent in everything you say and do.

Think about positional leaders. What is the intent of leaders who drive change purely through the force of their position in the organizational hierarchy? To generate business outcomes first. If they can do so while also creating a win for other people, that's certainly a nice bonus. But when tempted with a forced choice, they will go straight for the results even if it means that people get bruised in the process. I've worked with plenty of those leaders. At the end of the day, positional leaders are self-serving.

Servant leaders are different. Their intent is purely and simply to serve others—coworkers, customers, partners, communities. Servant leaders are motivated by caring and the agenda they seek is mutual benefit: "I want to win—but it is even more important to me that *you* win." I have worked with plenty of those leaders

as well. When their intent was pure, I knew it. I never needed to second-guess their agenda or motive. And, significantly, I wanted to give them my best in terms of quality work and personal loyalty. They truly inspired me to perform better and they absolutely brought out the best in me.

But why wait for people to infer your intent? You can accelerate trust by *declaring* your intent. John Mackey, the beloved CEO of Whole Foods Market, did this in dramatic fashion eight years ago when he wrote a letter to all employees of the organization. Here is an excerpt from that remarkable—and now legendary—company communication:

The tremendous success of Whole Foods Market has provided me with far more money than I ever dreamed I'd have and far more than is necessary for either my financial security or personal happiness. . . . I am now 53 years old and I have reached a place in my life where I no longer want to work for money, but simply for the joy of the work itself and to better answer the call to service that I feel so clearly in my own heart. Beginning on January 1, 2007, my salary will be reduced to \$1, and I will no longer take any other cash compensation. . . . The intention of the board of directors is for Whole Foods Market to donate all of the future stock options I would be eligible to receive to our two company foundations.

What do you imagine was the cultural impact of that statement? If you were an employee at Whole Foods Market, do you think this might have reawakened your own aspirations and commitment to the mission? And might it have increased Mackey's credibility as he led this fast-growing organization? It did both of those things, in abundance.

There are more tangible outcomes as well. Over time, a servant leader's authentic intent will eventually materialize in behavioral norms, and then ultimately in systems and structures. Today, Mackey's intent is manifest in Whole Foods' servant leadership culture. Intent shapes the organization. And it becomes real.

3. The deliberate behavior of the servant leader is authentic, trust-building behavior.



Behavior is ground zero for the servant leader. It is the place where conviction becomes real; where intent becomes a potent force for value-creating change; and where the leader can make intentional moves for the purpose of establishing a servant leadership culture.

For the servant leader, behavior isn't just *what* gets done but *how* it gets done. This principle shows up in the norms of many servant leader cultures. The former chairman and CEO of Procter & Gamble, Bob McDonald, put it this way: "How we achieve growth is as important as the results themselves." Similarly, at Marriott they say, "How we do business is as important as the business we do." Expressed another way: for the servant leader, the means preexist in the ends.

This stands in contrast to the positional leader, for whom the results take precedence over process; the *what* supersedes the *how*; and the end justifies the means. In dramatic cases this may show up as visibly unethical or illegal behavior. But most positional leaders I know are not overtly nefarious. Indeed, their behaviors may appear on the surface to build trust. But when they lack the servant leader intent, closer examination reveals a subtly counterfeit quality to the behaviors.

In *The Speed of Trust*, I identify behaviors that powerfully build trust. Each of those behaviors has an accompanying *opposite* and, perhaps more significantly, an accompanying *counterfeit*, which reflect how a positional leader more typically behaves. For example, one of the behaviors is to demonstrate respect. A positional leader may practice the counterfeit of demonstrating respect only to some—such as those who can do something for him; and not to others—those who can't.

Similarly, another trust-building behavior is to talk straight. The counterfeit would be to appear to deliver straight talk while in reality withholding or spinning some parts of the message.

You can see the subtle temptations that make these counterfeit behaviors appealing. I find that without self-reflection, many leaders actually believe their counterfeit behaviors come from a place of integrity. But they don't stand up to scrutiny. These behaviors may generate results for a while, but they're not sustainable—and worse, they diminish trust. Sooner or later, people always infer your real intent.

4. The strong bias of the servant leader is to extend trust to others.

Extending trust to others doesn't have to be an exercise in blind gullibility. It is an intentional action I call Smart Trust. It begins with a willingness to trust others—what I refer to as a person's *propensity to trust*. It is balanced with an analysis of the stakes and risks of extending that trust, which includes an assessment of the credibility of those being trusted. But the clear and decided bias is to start with trust. That starting point is what opens up boundless possibilities.

The positional leader seeks to control. The servant leader seeks to unleash talent and creativity by extending trust to others. Why? Because the servant leader fundamentally believes deeply in others—and in their potential.

I truly do empathize with the positional leader! It is a risk to extend trust to others. Many leaders I know have advanced in their careers by minimizing risk. They say, "I want it done right, so I do it myself." Some are even celebrated for this approach. But this orientation is exhausting, unsustainable, and incapable of delivering the endless innovation, energy, and engagement of an organization that has been electrified by trust.

Muhammed Yunus extended Smart Trust to the masses, and it won him the Nobel Peace Prize. Yunus was a university professor in Bangladesh who was grieved by the vicious cycle of poverty he saw around him. He believed his community would have the capacity to lift itself out of poverty through entrepreneurship if it only had access to capital. A person wouldn't need a lot of money—just \$25, for example, to purchase inventory for a vending cart. Out of this need, and ultimately out of millions of extensions of trust, Yunus founded the global microcredit movement.

Early in the process of making these small loans available to individual people, Yunus encountered a challenge. "The people said they couldn't provide collateral," Yunus reflected. "I said I will provide the collateral for them." And Grameen Bank was born.

Listen to Yunus's declaration of intent in describing the microcredit movement: "We are going to make a difference and draw people out of poverty. We are going to extend trust and people will thrive in it." Yunus understood a basic yet powerful principle of trust, which is that *people want to be trusted*. It's the most compelling form of human motivation. Grameen Bank has

the results to prove this principle: the microcredit movement has helped to lift literally tens of millions of people out of poverty. And the more than 98 percent rate of payback on loans demonstrates the world-changing results that can be achieved when a servant leader extends trust. Compare that to the 88 percent payback rate of traditional small business loans!

5. The purpose of the servant leader is *contribution*—to make a difference; to give back.

The positional leader serves the bottom line, or the self. The servant leader serves something greater, inspiring trust not only in the leader, but potentially in all of society as well.

Pedro Medina was a businessperson in the Republic of Colombia who helped to establish McDonald's restaurants there in 1999. He was painfully aware of the volatility of the neighborhoods where he lived and did business. His country was plagued with social instability. Kidnappings and terrorist acts dominated the daily headlines.

While teaching at a local university, he asked his students how many of the talented young people he was investing in intended to leave Colombia after graduation. Most of them raised their hands.

This pained him. "Why do you want to leave?" he asked. They told him, "We have lost hope. Can you tell us why we should stay?"

The question haunted him. So he founded an organization called *Yo Creo en Colombia* (I Believe in Colombia). A grassroots initiative, the organization's primary purpose was—and still is—to increase trust and confidence in Colombia, first at home and then abroad. It reaches out to Colombians to advocate for the achievements, potential, and resources of the country, and to leverage them "in order to build a fair, competitive, and inclusive nation." Since its inception, the foundation has touched hundreds of thousands of Colombians in 157 cities and 26 countries.

Medina created a powerful social movement and did it without positional authority. His efforts have not only taken root at the grassroots level, but also spawned institutional and structural changes at the national level. Three years after Medina began this initiative, a man named Alvaro Uribe, motivated by the impact of *Yo Creo en Colombia* and the numerous like-minded initiatives it inspired, was elected president on the very platform of *restaurando*

*la confianza* (“restoring trust”) that Medina had identified. Not only was Uribe able to succeed, he was the first Colombian to be reelected president in over a century. Today there is still great work to do, but the country has made massive strides in restoring trust in security, investment, and social cohesion.

Medina was just an ordinary businessperson with the heart of a servant leader, a vision and purpose bigger than himself, and the courage to take action. That was enough to change his entire country.

Though closely related, trust and servant leadership are not synonymous. But they do share some important commonalities. Both find their genesis in choice. And both are born in the intent of the leader. They are simple disciplines, but they are not easy. In fact, they are hard. Both trust and servant leadership require the full engagement of the leader as well as the courage to set aside self-serving pursuits in the service of other people and higher outcomes.

In fact, you can choose to accelerate your practice of trusting servant leadership right now, at this very moment. It begins with a self-audit and a commitment. Ask yourself:

- What is the level of trust I share with my relationships, my team, my stakeholders?
- What is my real intent? Is it truly to serve others, or is it to serve myself?
- What are some opportunities for declaring my real intent to others?
- What are some ways in which I can deliberately demonstrate my intent to serve through my behaviors?

Yes, there are risks involved when you set aside your own self-interests and extend trust to those around you. But I believe the greater risk is to withhold trust.

By both inspiring and extending trust, you enable yourself to create a mighty culture of servant leadership that speaks to the highest aspirations of the people you lead. I am confident that within just a few hours of reading this chapter, you will encounter an opportunity to demonstrate your servant leadership intent through trust-building behaviors.

Are you ready to seize that moment?

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*Speed of Trust, coauthor of Smart Trust, and a sought-after keynote speaker and adviser on trust, leadership, ethics, sales, and high performance. You can follow Covey on Twitter @StephenMRCovey.*

## Notes

1. Stephen M. R. Covey, *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything* (New York: Free Press, 2006).
2. Stephen M. R. Covey and Greg Link, *Smart Trust: Creating Prosperity, Energy, and Joy in a Low-Trust World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011).

## Chapter 5

# Great Leaders SERVE

MARK MILLER

*I met Mark Miller several years ago when I went to Atlanta to speak to all the Chick-fil-A managers. I was instantly blown away by his creative thinking about servant leadership. As a result, he became one of my favorite coauthors, on both The Secret and Great Leaders Grow. When you read this essay, you'll see what I mean.*

—KB

ALMOST TWENTY YEARS ago, our team at Chick-fil-A, Inc., began work on a project to accelerate leadership development across the organization. Our first conclusion: we needed a common definition of leadership. Any attempts to scale the process of helping leaders grow would be frustrating, if not futile, without a clear picture of success.

After a lot of research, discussion, and debate, we thought we might have an idea worth pursuing. However, we had what I would call a crisis of confidence as we looked at a simple outline representing our point of view. I clearly remember one of the group members saying, “What if this isn’t right?”

Although collectively we had read a couple of hundred books on leadership, we knew a lot more about chicken than we did creating a leadership culture. We knew the stakes were high: we were about to declare our very definition of leadership. Such a simple and definitive statement would drive countless hours of development, tens of millions of dollars of investment, and, perhaps most important, this definition would shape the caliber of our leaders for decades to come.

Then someone said, “I have an idea . . . What if we seek some outside perspective?” Well, you can chalk it up to coincidence or divine intervention, but I was scheduled to be with Ken Blanchard the next day! I offered to share our outline with him, and the team was in full agreement.

I'll never forget that encounter with Ken. I handed him a single sheet of paper and quickly explained how we were trying to accelerate leadership development. And then I said, "Do you think our model is true? Have we missed anything? Will it stand the test of time?"

Ken's response was strong and immediate: "This has got to be a book!"

As you may or may not know, that conversation led to my first book with Ken, *The Secret: What Great Leaders Know and Do*.<sup>1</sup> He and I took a simple outline and transformed it into a parable that today is being shared around the world in more than twenty-five languages.

Why has the book been so successful? Besides Ken's powerful global brand, I think the book has struck a chord in the hearts and minds of leaders around the planet because of the truth contained within its pages. The secret is out!

Here's a quick overview of five strategic ways great leaders SERVE:

*See and shape the future.* Leadership always begins with a picture of the future. Leaders who cannot paint a compelling picture of a preferred future are in jeopardy of forfeiting their leadership. People want to know: Where are we going? What are we trying to accomplish? What are we trying to become? And why does it matter? We encourage leaders not to give away their influence by failing to answer these critical questions. If you don't know the answers, start figuring them out. Clarity will often come in the midst of activity. If you are stuck, get moving. Who wants to follow a leader who doesn't know where they are trying to go? When the vision is clear and compelling, it will create life, energy, and momentum.

*Engage and develop others.* Ken and I were writing about engagement before it was cool—but make no mistake, it has always been critical. Engagement is about creating the context for people to thrive. The annual engagement survey of American workers, year after year, paints a grim picture of staggeringly low engagement. This is not an indictment of the workers; it is the leaders who need to make a change. The reason development is called out is because of its critical importance. Yes, it could be considered a strategy for raising engagement levels. However, it could also be missed. We believe leaders who are not proactively developing others are missing a vital aspect of their role.

*Reinvent continuously.* This fundamental of great leaders is a big idea. Most leaders have heard the expression “If you do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you always got.” To make progress, to move forward, to accomplish bigger and better, something has to change! To help leaders break it down into manageable pieces we talk about three arenas, each having its own diagnostic questions. *Self:* How are you reinventing yourself? *Systems:* Which work processes need to change to generate better results? *Structure:* What structural changes could you make to better enable the accomplishment of your goals? There are many more questions, but these will usually start a productive conversation.

*Value results and relationships.* This is the tenet that generates the most angst for many leaders. Having taught this content around the globe for almost twenty years, there is no doubt in my mind this is the most challenging element of our model. Would you agree? I bet you would. The reason: virtually every leader has a natural bias. Our wiring pulls us toward one or the other. This is not necessarily bad—but if we aren’t careful, it can severely limit our effectiveness. Having a default setting won’t destroy your leadership if you can successfully compensate for your bias. The best leaders value both! There is a principle at play here: the tremendous power in the tension. Our challenge as leaders is to manage the tension. Only then can we productively channel its power.

*Embody the values.* People always watch the leader—whether we want them to or not! They are generally looking for clues regarding what’s important to the leader. They are also trying to determine if the leader is trustworthy. So what’s the link between embodying the values and trustworthiness? If a leader says something is important, people expect that person to live like it’s important. The gap between what we say and do as leaders can be lethal. People generally don’t follow a leader they don’t trust. Worse yet, if someone doesn’t trust the leader but stays on the payroll, you don’t have an advocate for your organization and your culture, you have an adversary. Leaders must do everything humanly possible to walk the talk!

Are you ready to become a serving leader? I hope so!

I have one closing thought for you. If you are looking for the latest techniques in coercing people to do your bidding, you can continue your search.



Servant leadership is not for you. It's not a strategy or shortcut to success. However, if you are willing to begin the long journey of adding value to others, putting their interests ahead of your own, helping them win, and mastering the five fundamentals we just reviewed, you will enjoy new levels of success, satisfaction, and impact.

Great leaders SERVE!

*In more than thirty years with Chick-fil-A, Mark Miller has served in numerous leadership capacities including restaurant operations, quality and customer satisfaction, and corporate communications. He travels extensively, teaching on a variety of topics including teams, servant leadership, and training. He is the author of Chess Not Checkers, The Secret of Teams, The Heart of Leadership, and his latest, Leaders Made Here: Building a Leadership Culture. He is also coauthor with Ken Blanchard of Great Leaders Grow and the international bestseller The Secret: What Great Leaders Know and Do. Follow Mark Miller on Twitter: @LeadersServe.*

## Note

1. Ken Blanchard and Mark Miller, *The Secret: What Great Leaders Know and Do* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2009, 2014).

## Chapter 6

# Servant Leadership

### *What Does It Really Mean?*

MARK A. FLOYD

*I've come to admire Mark Floyd from our work together at conferences designed to spread the word about servant leadership. He's not only a successful entrepreneur, but also an extraordinary thinker about what it takes to be a servant leader. Mark and I both believe that everyone is a potential servant leader. Regardless of whether we have an organizational position, we are all potential servant leaders as we interact with others on a day-to-day basis, as Mark emphasizes in this essay. —KB*

SERVANT LEADERSHIP is about helping people succeed both professionally and individually. It's all about serving those you are responsible *for* and those you are responsible *to*.

Who was the greatest servant leader of all time? There is no doubt in my mind it was Jesus. He demonstrated it in His time and continues to demonstrate it today. It's in His nature. We mortals think we have to work at being servant leaders, but it's not impossible. In fact, it's amazing—for me, the harder I tried to be a servant leader, the tougher it was. But the more I prayed about it and let it just enter me, the easier and better it was.

Who are potential servant leaders? We all are. Whether you're a CEO, a self-employed professional, a stock room clerk, a receptionist, a stay-at-home parent, or a good friend to someone—whatever you do, at times you are a leader. What you do every day—what people see you do—is a reflection on yourself, your faith, your life, and everything else. So what I'm talking about in this essay is *you* as a leader. I hope my thoughts will help.

## Don't Let Other People Set Your Leadership Style for You

I remember my first job out of college when I went to work for a *Fortune* 500 company. I had great respect for the CEO and for the company. It had a great culture that had been developed by the founder. My first couple of weeks there, I listened to tapes that helped me define the company and its style and values. Shortly afterward, though, a new CEO came on board with a different leadership style—one I didn't particularly care for. I was a young, naïve guy, but I noticed that the whole organization was changing. People were changing their leadership styles to adapt to this person—the new CEO. He was very terse, demeaning, and demanding. From my vantage point he wasn't a very good leader—he was the antithesis of what servant leadership is all about. As time went on, I found that most of the organization was moving in his direction. I told myself I couldn't go there—it wasn't my leadership style. The CEO eventually left the company and a new leader came in and turned things back around. Today it is a very successful company. So hold true to your leadership style. Don't let influences change you. *You* change the influences.

## Servant Leadership Works in Any Type of Organization

A business should be functional. If you ever see an organizational chart for your company, pick out your name. If you have at least one name below you that has a line to you, you're considered a manager.

Now notice all the people at the bottom of the chart: the sales people, clerks, accounting people, receptionists, and others who don't have anyone reporting to them. *Those* are the people who talk to the customers. I believe that to reflect reality you need to take the chart and turn it upside down. That way, the CEO and the management teams serve the employees who serve the customers. Ken Blanchard said it right: "How can you serve your customers with excellence when your people are serving the CEO?"

In Mark 9:35, after the disciples have talked among themselves about which of them was the greatest, Jesus says, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all." That's what servant leadership is about.

## The Importance of Your Organizational Culture

Some companies are known for great products, great designs, and the way they take care of their people. Southwest Airlines, for example, is an amazing

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