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Leadership Tune-Up

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The topic of leadership can be inspiring and motivating. Let's give insight into something you can explore for yourself - that leadership development is a continuous journey, and you have opportunities and role models to learn from in your "world." Continue to strengthen your skills and "tune-up" your leadership!

By simple definition, leadership is the art of motivating others to act towards achieving a common goal. They possess a combination of personality traits and leadership skills which create and build collaboration, empower forward-motion and even change. Some may be known as "natural leaders." Others work at it, purposefully and intentionally putting skills into practice, and often investing time and energy attending trainings or workshops (such as those hosted by WFEA), seeking webinars, blog sites, TED Talks, or reading to grow their awareness and broaden their vision.

Examples of leadership include:

- Inspiring a shared vision
- Decision-making capabilities
- Commitment and passion
- Emotional intelligence
- Delegation and empowerment
- Focusing on the situation, issue or behavior, not on the person
- Conflict resolution
- Leading by example
- Honesty and integrity
- Accountability
- Creativity and innovation
- Communicate, communicate, communicate



Who do you see as leaders in your immediate circle or sphere? Executive or senior management at work?



President of the company or Chairman of the Board of Directors? These are most likely respected individuals who have earned the trust of their teams through positive and successful outcomes across a vast array of experiences, accountability, and longevity. Widening the perimeter and parameters, we are surrounded by individuals with valuable leadership qualities from which we can learn: staff we work with, volunteers in our organization(s), coaches and the sports community of ourselves or that of our children, representatives from our faith communities, within our hobbies or personal passions, within our artistic talents and associations, and retirees in our communities who give their time to be involved. We may think of the Police Chief, but what about the Patrol or School Resource Officer building trust and relationships with youth? Yes, the Principal or School Superintendent, but what about the classroom teachers who are not only working with students, but with the parents and guardians, and leading them through strategies which will improve student outcomes. What about the committee volunteer who gives their time to serve as the event ambassador at community meetings with area merchants, or gives reports, ensures planning and logistics, and works 1:1 with the local municipality?

How closely does one pay attention to the leadership attributes of those you admire? Do you notice how they lead a meeting, address difficult or controversial topics, encourage brainstorming but also help define the process and timely next steps, handle customer service with the public, how do they make a plan and determine action steps and timelines with peers, colleagues, management, stakeholders, volunteer or community members? What is their candor, manner, body language, vocabulary, word choice, and tone?



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Have you taken a moment to compliment someone whose style or attributes you appreciate? How did they refine their skills? What inspires them? Acknowledging the leadership strengths of others reinforces those qualities for us. It puts those desirable traits and skills on the forefront of our minds, not buried in the white noise of everyday life. It is about being mindful and paying attention to the people in our lives who conduct themselves in a way we find inspiring.

I reached out to a few individuals I have long admired as leaders, seeking their recommendations for leadership-oriented materials. They represent a sales team within Microsoft, careers in marketing and economic development, chorus director, and a retired executive director of a Foundation. Here is an abbreviated list which has fueled their passion to be inspiring leaders:

- Start with Why, Simon Sinek
- Leadership and Self Deception, The Arbinger Institute
- Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, Carol S. Dweck
- Radical Candor: Be a Kick-Ass Boss Without Losing Your Humanity, Kim Scott
- Playing Big, Tara Mohr
- A New Earth, Eckhart Tolle
- Principles, Ray Dalio
- Dare to Lead, Brene Brown
- Fierce Leadership, Susan Scott
- Leadership Excellence, Pat Williams
- The Speed of Trust, Stephen M.R. Covey

If your actions
inspire others
to dream more, learn more,
do more and become more,
you are a
LEADER.

Who is in the well of people we cross paths with every day that may not carry the title of CEO, but demonstrates leadership? For me, one of those individuals is Katy H. (mortgage lender), with whom I currently have an a cappella group. I have watched Katy participate in Pacific Northwest region, music-related, organization-wide discussions, synthesizing information across a broad range of opinions, historical and experience-based perspectives, and diverse demographics of the participants. Katy had the ability to summarize and encapsulate the spectrum of comments, and propose forward thinking action steps on behalf of the group. Katy's skill and talent united a group that otherwise may have migrated into dissention and discord.

Just as we are inspired and learn from others, there may be people who are looking to you as one of their role models. Are they observing and taking note of the leadership qualities you demonstrate? How about a call to action for yourself: to actively and intentionally look, identify and reflect on examples of leadership, and take proactive steps to stretch yourself and enhance your skills. Bravo to you for growing and putting your skills into practice, and recognizing that this will "tune-up" your strengths as a leader.

