



February 2008

Masterful Mentoring

▼ TIP

Tip of the Month

Use your mentoring relationship as a testing ground for employing servant leadership attributes.

▼ MANAGING DOWNWARD

As you begin to ascend in your career, it is important to consider how you are affecting those beneath you. The measure of a leader is taken by the quality and enthusiasm of his/her followers. Great leaders have followers who are ready to go above and beyond the ordinary when called on to do so. By inspiring strong followership, you can truly separate yourself from the ordinary manager and increase the likelihood of advancing higher and faster than your peers. In this article, we will discuss the best practices for managing downward in an organization and how to leverage your mentoring relationship to increase your effectiveness.

The Heart of Managing

The mechanical practice of managing downward encompasses skill areas such as delegation, project and/or people management, and resource allocation. Instead of addressing the mechanics of managing downward, we will elevate the discussion by exploring the mindset that guides the approach and motivation that give expression to the actions of management. In a sense we are separating the head (mechanics) of management from the heart (mindset) of management. It is infinitely more important to have a good grasp on what good management is and why you are pursuing it, than it is to simply learn the mechanics of various management techniques.

Most people have the opportunity to lead in today's work environment, even at the lowest stratus of management. As you move upward in organizations, these opportunities increase with the role, responsibility, and authority that you possess. Regardless of whether you are responsible for organizing the efforts of a few or the entire enterprise, your ability to lead will become the defining characteristic of your performance. The central question is, are others inspired enough to follow your lead? Those above you in the organization are looking for leaders who inspire loyalty and engender outstanding performance from their followership.



MANAGING DOWNWARD (cont.)

The Servant Leader

Based on these desired results, what is the required mindset that sets a leader apart? Several terms that have been used to describe these leaders are custodians, stewards, and servant leaders. For the purpose of this article, we will use the term servant leadership. (The phrase "Servant Leadership" was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in *The Servant as Leader*, an essay that he first published in 1970.) There is a distinct difference between the leader who desires to serve first and lead as an act of service, as opposed to those who want to lead first. The disparity in attitude comes down to choosing service over self-interest. By and large most of us want to follow a leader who is looking after our best interest first. Followers want to know that they are cared for and that those above them are enabling their growth and preparing them for future utility.

In practice, servant leadership creates a context where followers are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions, take reasonable risks, and be authentic at work. A servant leader embodies this reality through key behaviors.

Servant Leaders:

- *Set the Example* – This occurs when leaders live out their values and serve as examples of acceptable behavior. Followers, by nature, will emulate the expressed attributes of the leader. If you fly off the handle and act out emotionally to perceived setbacks, then you should not be surprised to see this same behavior from your followers. The same can be said about approaches to communications, planning, problem solving, decision making, and other critical interactive behaviors.
- *Empower Followers* – This is the ability to enable followers to reach their potential by helping them take responsibility for their work and themselves. This translates into communicating a preferred vision of the future (giving long-term meaning and purpose), establishing boundaries for independent action (setting behavioral guidelines, goals, work methods, and personal expectations), and encouraging responsible risk-taking (risks need to be identified and outcomes projected so they can become learning opportunities). When servant leaders empower followers, they establish individual freedom, accountability, and responsibility among followers.
- *Show Up Consistently* – This is the ability to hold steadfast to your commitments and resolutions. This is accomplished by doing what you say you are going to do, and acknowledging when you are unable to meet a commitment. Overall, you want to be authentic; in doing so, you show others that it is okay for them to do the same. For instance, if you are falling behind on a critical goal, it does no good to ignore it. By disclosing the truth, you may discover how to either correct the problem or set better projections the next time.

RESOURCES

Triple Creek offers many free resources on our web site, including booklets, research papers, and an archive of past newsletters.

Visit www.3creek.com for access to these additional mentoring resources.



MANAGING DOWNWARD (cont.)

By adopting the mindset and practices of a servant leader, you can increase your ability to manage downward in the organization. To do so you will need to apply self-restraint, develop discipline, and practice respect for others. These personal practices assist in cultivating the mindset that enables servant leadership.

QUOTE

Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.

- Peter F. Drucker

- *Self-restraint* – Holding natural tendencies and self-centered impulses in check long enough to consider the impact on others is often a learned process. Unless you are naturally prone to stoicism, you will need to learn to restrain emotional reaction long enough to apply reason and logic before acting in order to minimize selfish action. This becomes especially important in volatile situations.
- *Discipline* – Gaining mastery over your reactions and teaching yourself to be focused on others will take time and repetition. Being honest with yourself and your mentoring partner about when and where you miss opportunities to serve your followers will require intentional effort.
- *Respect* – Recognizing the value and worth of others can be difficult in today's work environment where individual accomplishment and achievement are highly sought after and rewarded. It can be helpful to discuss the difficulties you may have in seeing the inherent value in those who cause you irritation or discomfort, leading you to be a better servant leader.

Engaging in these personal practices can be difficult in environments where you are expected to produce instant results and meet tight deadlines. Your mentoring partner can help provide some guidance and share relevant experience as you endeavor to become more effective at servant leadership and managing downward.

The Practice Exercise on the following page provides a starting point for you and your mentoring partner to begin working on the elements that make great servant leaders.



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MANAGING DOWNWARD (cont.)

Practice Exercise

The following exercise can help you construct a plan for increasing your effectiveness related to managing downward.

1. Assess your servant leadership mindset by completing the following self-evaluation.

Self-Evaluation

Circle the answer that most closely matches your belief.

I am motivated to lead others...
...out of a need to serve others first.
...primarily for self-interest.

Rate how closely you agree with the following statements.

	Low					High				
My followers agree that I set the example for them.	1	2	3	4	5					
My followers agree that I empower them.	1	2	3	4	5					
My followers agree that I show up consistently.	1	2	3	4	5					

2. Discuss your self-evaluation results with your mentoring partner and solicit his/her perspective of your assessment.
3. If you have determined that you need to strengthen your servant leadership mindset, determine what new attitudes you are going to adopt and subsequent actions you are going to take.
4. Set up a time to review your progress with your mentoring partner.