

# LEADERSHIP BASICS MODULE

Managers are people who do things right, while leaders are people who do the right thing.

-Warren Bennis "On Becoming a Leader"

## Introduction

What is a leader? What is Leadership? The cornerstone of leadership education must begin with a definition of what *is* a leader? Although each individual has an intuitive sense of what being a leader means to them, those individual definitions can differ across the board from person to person.

## Lesson Objectives

At the end of the lesson, individuals should be able to:

1. Develop their own definition of leadership
2. Discuss concepts that are necessary for the study of leadership
3. Analyze factors that affect someone's ability to lead

## Lesson Content

### **The definition of a leader...**

What is a leader? Someone once said that there are as many definitions of leadership as there are of love. In order to get your organization or group on the same page, having a commonly accepted definition of leadership is important. In 50 years, there have been 65 different definitions or classifications of leadership.

From the American Heritage Dictionary, a leader is:

1. One that leads or guides
2. One who is in charge or in command of others
3. One who heads a political party or organization.
4. One who has influence or power, especially of a political nature.

From the same source, we hear that leadership is:

1. The position or office of a leader
2. Capacity or ability to lead
3. A group of leaders
4. Guidance; direction

Don Clark, of *Big Dog Leadership* defines leadership in this way:

"Leadership is a complex process by which a person influences others to accomplish a mission, task or objective, and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent."

Peter Northouse, in his book *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 2nd Edition, defines leadership as: "...a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal". (Northouse, 2001, pg 3)

Others definitions of leadership include the way a group processes issues, personalities, specific behaviors, power/relationships, or a way to achieve goals.

Whatever way you choose to define leadership, remember that someone else may define it differently. Before your organization or group can move forward, you must come up with a way of thinking about leadership that everyone can agree upon.

### **Skills of leadership**

The definition is just the first step in the study of leadership. Once you, or your group, has developed your leadership definition, the next step is to figure out the skills that are needed in becoming a leader. When studying leadership, you will have the opportunity to study many different ideas, theories, and concepts. However, often times, these skills fall into three distinct categories:

- ❖ **Technical Skills- What you study**
  - Methods, Processes, Procedures
  - Ability to use tools
  - Ability to operate equipment
- ❖ **Conceptual Skills- Your Ability to Analyze Situations and Generate Ideas**
  - Analyze a situation
  - Think logically
  - Combine concepts and ideas into a workable relationship
- ❖ **Human Relations Skills- Your Understanding and Ability to Work with People**
  - Interpersonal processes
  - Members' Attitude
  - Members' Motives
  - Communication Skills
  - Cooperation

Some concepts that are common to the study of leadership that are covered here in the site are:

- Leadership Styles
- Group Processes
- Power
- Goals/Visioning
- Ethics/Character
- Diversity
- Motivation
- Time Management
- Conflict Resolution
- Communications

### How do some people become leaders?

There are five commonly accepted ideas on how people become leaders. They are:

- ❖ They are the center of an activity
- ❖ Their personality
- ❖ Induction of compliance of the followers
- ❖ Persuasion
- ❖ Status

### Factors affecting leaders

Leaders and leadership do not stand alone. No man is an island, unaffected by the outside world. There are outside factors that can influence leadership development.

Don Clark, Big Dog Leadership, suggests that four factors affect leadership. Those factors are:

- **Leaders-** To be a leader you have to know...YOU! Know your own strengths, challenges, and who you are as an individual. Without knowing these basic items about yourself, it will be difficult to take leadership of a group.
- **Followers-** Different people have different needs. The types of leaders needed to inspire and motivate those people are definitely one of those needs. One of the most basic leadership principles is that leaders need to know the people that follow them. As a leader, it is only by knowing your followers that you can identify their needs and provide them with the most effective leadership style.
- **Communication-** Verbal and non-verbal communication is key in leadership. Not only when you talk with your followers, but in written communications and in the non-verbal cues you give, you are always "on". As a leader, you must set an example in everything you do.
- **Situation-** EVERY situation is different. Each day will bring new challenges and new rewards. Leaders must use their own judgment and gut instincts to determine what course of action they will take as situations arise.

### What is a leader?

Many times we try to come up with ways to describe leaders or what we think leaders should be. Whether we are talking about the President of the United States, or the president of the PTA, each of us has our own idea of the skills or traits that an ideal leader should or could possess. This list (not exhaustive of course) has been used to help describe good leaders:

- |  |                          |                    |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------|
| ❖ Knowledgeable                                  | ❖ Problem solver         | ❖ Influence people |
| ❖ Confident                                      | ❖ Compassionate          | ❖ Motivating       |
| ❖ Respectable                                    | ❖ Works well with others | ❖ Accountable      |
| ❖ Role model                                     | ❖ Goal oriented          | ❖ Effective        |
| ❖ Observant                                      | ❖ Good communicator      | ❖ Good listener    |
| ❖ Capable of making mistakes and correcting them | ❖ Personality oriented   | ❖                  |

## **Managers vs. Leaders**

What is the difference between *LEADING* and *MANAGING*?

Managers:

- ❖ Administer
- ❖ Eye the bottom line
- ❖ Imitate
- ❖ Do things right
- ❖ Efficient

Leaders:

- ❖ Innovate
- ❖ Eye the horizons
- ❖ Originate
- ❖ Do the right thing
- ❖ Effective

Just because you consider yourself a "manager" does not mean that you do not innovate. And just because you consider yourself a leader does not mean that you do not keep your eye on the bottom line. These traits are not limited to the individual or category that they fall under. You should be able to use any of these traits depending on the situation you find yourself in. However, in general these are good guidelines from which to start.

## **What is a leader capable of?**

In Ohio, a study was done on the capabilities of a leader. The study discovered that a leader should be capable of 5 distinct tasks.

1. Focus on the present and the future simultaneously to create a vision
2. Build a bridge among and between interests groups
3. Understand events by scanning, monitoring, and interpreting events
4. Develop appraisal skills and use intuition to take calculated risks
5. Manage their symbols to formulate an image, understand symbols and plan a strategy

## **Learning to Lead**

In learning to lead, there are steps we must take as current and future leaders to ensure that we are doing all we can to lead the best way we can. Those steps are:

- ❖ Study good leaders
- ❖ Study yourself
- ❖ Become a good follower
- ❖ Learn about different groups
- ❖ Actively plan your training

## **Reflection Questions**

- ❖ There are lots of different ways to define leadership. What definition provided in this lesson did you feel best described the concept of leadership? Think about how you think of leadership. How would you define leadership and what it means to be a leader?

- ❖ Many skills were mentioned that leaders need. What skills do you feel leaders need the most? Make a list of five skills and put them in order of "most" to "least" important. Why did you select the skills you selected? Why did you put them in the order you put them in?
- ❖ Give some examples of the factors that affect leaders. What can you do to help yourself and others mitigate some of these circumstances?
- ❖ Why do we talk about the differences of managers versus leaders? Why is the difference important?
- ❖ Why is study an important part of leadership? Why do we study good leaders? Why should we study ourselves? Why do we study groups? How can this information help us to become more effective leaders?

### **Activity: Leader/Manager**

Group Size: Any, and for large groups, this can be done in teams

Materials Needed: markers and large sheets of paper

Set-Up: Give each individual or team a sheet of paper and some markers

Activity: Have the individuals or teams write the words LEADER and MANAGER down the left side of the front and back of the paper; so their papers will look like this

Front:	Back:
L	M
E	A
A	N
D	A
E	G
R	E
	R

Give them an assigned time to come up with traits or characteristics that begin with each letter for each style. For example they might use the word "enthusiastic" for an E in LEADER or "analytical" for an A in MANAGER.

Suggested Reflection Questions for Activity:

- ❖ Why did you select the words you selected?
- ❖ Could you have picked different words?
- ❖ How did your words differ from some of the other people/groups?
- ❖ How does this reflect our own different perceptions and ideas of leadership?

### **References**

- Clark, D. (1997). *Big dog leadership*. Retrieved from [www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leader.html](http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leader.html) on October 5, 2003.
- Northouse, P. (2001). *Leadership theory and practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- The American Heritage Dictionary, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (2000). Pickett, J.P., et. Al. (ed). Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin.