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Politicians are servant-leaders whether they like it or not. Their job, as we all know it, is to serve the people first. Sadly, many politicians tend to quote that statement but once elected, fail to the job they once promised they would. Check out this thought-provoking piece at: [bit.ly/ANpoliticsserve](http://bit.ly/ANpoliticsserve)

Our culture and upbringing have influenced us to think that our sense of identity is tied to the things we own in life. On the other hand, stewardship has the connotation that you have less control because you have to give account to somebody higher than you. What's the difference between ownership and stewardship? Can we ever live up to one without the other? How can we apply these principles in our workplace? Check out this podcast here: [bit.ly/RYGstewardship](http://bit.ly/RYGstewardship)

■ John Moi is the founder and advocate of *Scriptures-to-business* (S2b) applications. What are your thoughts on servant leadership? Have you considered applying these principles in your organisations? Why, or why not? We'll like to hear from you, so write to us at [editor@leaderonomics.com](mailto:editor@leaderonomics.com).

By JOHN MOI  
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**S**ERVANT leadership is simply applying leadership principles by serving others before self.

It is a leadership practice that achieves results for their organisations by giving priority to the needs of their counterparts and those they serve. In another interpretation, servant leaders are said to be serving stewards of their organisation's resources – be it physical, financial or humanly speaking.

### CONCEPT OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

The modern servant leadership movement was launched by Robert K Greenleaf in his 1970 essay, *The Servant as Leader* whereby he popularised the terms "servant-leader" and "servant leadership". Greenleaf expanded on this concept by publishing additional essays on the various attributes of servant leadership.

After his passing in 1990, the concept was further advocated by other thought leaders and experts such as William W George (also widely known as Bill George), James A Autry, Kenneth Hartley Blanchard, James C Hunter, George SanFacon and Larry Spears.

Interestingly, the Royal Military College (*Maktab Tentera Diraja*) in Malaysia carries the motto, "Serve to Lead" (*Berkhidmat Memimpin*) way back in its founding year of 1952!

### QUALITIES OF BEING A SERVANT LEADER

Spears, who was once the "chief steward" of the Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership for more than 17 years, described the following 10 characteristics of servant leaders, plus my personal perspectives on each quality:

#### 1 Listening

Servant leaders listen to the people. They exist to serve the flock, not themselves. It works to have excellent listening skills; otherwise, they might find themselves ousted from leadership.

#### 2 Empathy

Sympathy is not good enough for servant leaders. They need to feel more and do more for the followers who empowered them. Otherwise, why lead?

#### 3 Healing

Effective servant leaders can heal relationships; resolve unfavourable situations by being a peacemaker and mend rifts that arise from human conflicts. They can help heal a nation by marshalling the resources against tyranny.

#### 4 Awareness

Servant leaders need to know themselves and the people they lead. They need to be aware that their actions and words can make or break the community. Such leaders strive towards universal values and principles that benefit humankind.

#### 5 Persuasion

Good servant leaders will persuade and not manipulate their followers. They will persuade the congregation by logical reasoning and not by the "don't ask any questions" statement!

#### 6 Conceptualisation

They must have the insight to look at the big picture and translate it into smaller clusters. Helpful skills include the short, medium and long-term strategic implementation that will meet the common objective(s) of the team.

#### 7 Foresight

Great servant leaders will need to have foresight to learn from the past; and prepare for the present and future

# SERVANT LEADERSHIP

THE WORLD'S MISSING PIECE?

THOUGHT  
OF THE  
WEEK



Servant leaders are said to be serving stewards of their organisation's resources – be it physical, financial or humanly speaking

Kent M Keith, the former chief executive officer of the Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership and the author of *The Case for Servant Leadership* stated that servant leadership is practical, ethical and meaningful.

He further identifies seven key practices of servant leaders:

- Self-awareness
- Listening
- Changing the pyramid
- Developing your colleagues (followers)
- Coaching not controlling
- Unleashing the energy and intelligence of others
- Foresight

### IN CONCLUSION

Servant leadership is best summed up by its emphasis on collaboration, trust, empathy and the ethical use of power and leadership.

Servant leadership is all about making the conscious decision to serve by leading others (followers), enhance the growth of individuals, and for the servant leaders themselves in organisations to improve teamwork.

In today's world of self-centred takers and tremendous turmoil, the main question on leadership is: Do the present global leaders have what it takes to be servant leaders?

by analysing the environmental influences of political, economic, social and technological factors that will affect the well-being of the community.

#### 8 Stewardship

Servant leaders understand that people's lives and wellbeing are entrusted to them. Wrongful decisions will betray their trust and destroy them. Even nations are subjected to fall by blatant abuse of stewardship at the highest level.

#### 9 Commitment to the growth of others

Committed servant leaders will grow their followers by setting good leadership examples, helping and nurturing the followers regardless of race, religion or creed. They understand and implement the concepts of "unity in diversity" and "we are in the same boat" effectively.

#### 10 Building community

Budding servant leaders must endeavour to build communities of love and servanthood despite the multicultural and multiracial background of the people being led. In the near future, we will see more universal values being

adopted to build such communities. Interfaith dialogues will be encouraged and interracial partnerships will enhance community-building.

### MODERN PERSPECTIVES OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Greenleaf, in his essay, has this to say about the servant leader: "The servant-leader begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve first the followers and believes that leading is a by-product of serving, whereas the leader-first believes that one is called to lead by being served and supported by followers."

The cynical view is that unless the leaders take the initiative to serve the followers, the followers will not listen to the leaders who have not proven themselves by serving the followers first.

Such are the expectations in this enlightened age!

### MODELS OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

It can be said that some, if not most, leaders see servant leadership as an esoteric philosophy of leadership supported by specific aspects and practices.