

Example of responsible leadership essay

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Diary Entry for Book by John E. Gardner

On leadership by John W. Gardner was interesting from the very beginning. I liked the way the author immediately reminds the reader that in order to have a leader there must be followers. He adds a new twist though because he offered a new definition for followers, “constituents,” for example in most businesses to say that a business leader has followers is not really true because the followers are, in fact, subordinates (Gardner, 1993, p. 3). In Chapter 3 the topic of Leader-Constituent is addressed in more detail. Gardner made it clear that he does not think having a leader with subordinates would be very healthy for any organization. Instead he suggested that followers should be called constituents so that the label would reflect their job as one of activity not passivity. Constituents should be strengthened and supported by their leader not subordinated. This logic gave me very positive feelings. I feel more comfortable with the idea of team work and interaction than with leaders and followers. In the leader/subordinate relationship often when things go right the leader takes all the credit but if things go wrong the employees (subordinates) take all the blame.

Chapter 5 listed the attributes of a good leader with examples from history. The most important attribute out of the twelve attributes that Gardner listed is “intelligence and judgment –in-action” (1993, p. 49). No person that cannot think on their feet should be in a leadership position. A leader should be intelligent which includes meaning that they have the ethical and moral values Gardner described. The descriptions of the moral strength and

character of Ann Hutchinson and Daniel Webster were short but exciting. This chapter had other good historical examples. It also made me feel excited to take a leadership position. It was also a motivational chapter as the historical anecdotes made me want to be a good leader.

Gardner has included the heading of ' Illusion and Reality' in Chapter 5. This chapter brought up some very disturbing issues. The types of leaders discussed were not only in the business world but also in politics. The problem with using tricks and lies in management is that there is no guarantee that the product will be high quality or that it will be delivered on time. Gardner described how people have " confuse(d) style and substance, choosing as a leader someone who looked the part or talked the part but could not be the part" (1993, p. 54). This subject is upsetting because it is hard many times to understand what is ' real' and what is an ' illusion' until something goes wrong. Also Chapter 6 on Power was very interesting but also upsetting. The chapter seemed to be a warning about misuse of power. The most important part of this chapter was when Gardner pointed out that just saying a certain person has power does not really give much information. What kind of power does that person have? Who does the person have power over? Sometimes those two questions cannot be answered unless some research is done because the answers are not always obvious.

I learned from this book that a person cannot turn into a good leader overnight. The interesting thing is that all the activities that a leader needs to do for constituents they need to do for themselves too. A good leader

needs to find strategies to stay motivated so they are able to motivate others. A leader cannot possibly take on all the tasks necessary by themselves. They have to be able to let go and allow other people to take on responsibilities and finish tasks. Gardner calls this “ sharing leadership tasks” (1993, p. 138). This means that a leader cannot be very controlling. A leader has to trust their own talents and skills but they also need to trust the talents and skill of the people around them. The book Gardner has written seems to be a very good lesson in Transformational leadership because Gardner does not advocate a rigid leadership style. A leader must have the ability to handle changes, remain flexible and adapt to new situations. This book is a real classic and probably will never go out of style.

The most lasting thoughts I take away from this book are that to be a good leader is a lifetime commitment and a great leader must be willing to take risks.