

Servant leadership essay

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Servant leadership is a vital element in the most successful companies in the United States. The concept of servant leadership has been around for a long time and for good reason. It's a solid concept whose potential is finally being realized. The following pages will examine the benefits of servant leadership and what it is. Its role in the workplace will be examined and why it plays a crucial function in the success of any organization.

Before it can be determined whether servant leadership is needed, let's examine what servant leadership is. Servant leadership is based on the principle of serving others. The concept of servant leadership was conceived by Robert K. Greenleaf (1977), known as the originator of this management style. According to Greenleaf, servant leadership " begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first.

Next, a conscious choice brings one to " aspire to lead. " Leaders have two primary responsibilities; to make certain the needs of others are served and to have concern for people. A Servant leader must be more focused on people than on responsibilities.

Though inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus, Greenleaf's inspiration of servant leadership came together after reading Journey to the East by Hermann Hesse (1956). In this story a group of people take a mythological expedition. The main character Leo, goes with the party as their servant.

Leo was also a person with great presence and spirit who also sustained the group with songs. Everything is going well until Leo vanishes. Soon after, the group falls into dismay and the journey ends. Without Leo, They are unable to continue.

Years later, one of the group runs into Leo and it is discovered that Leo is not a servant but a great and noble leader. Greenleaf realized from reading this story that great leaders are viewed as servants first, and this is the reason why they are great. Leo was the leader the whole time but his character forced him to be the servant first. Servant leaders start with a desire to serve and then the aspiration to lead comes next. This is dramatically different from the person who wants to be a leader first due to a hunger for power or money. It is easy to talk about how to serve others, but how does an individual put these into action? How should an individual behave in order to exhibit the characteristics of a servant leader? Larry Spears, CEO of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, has deliberated on Greenleaf's writings and culled ten characteristics that are essential for servant leaders" (Carroll, 2005). Listening- leaders have been known for their decision making and ability to talk to others, they also need to have the talent to be able to understand people and pay careful attention when they speak.

Empathy- According to Daniel Goleman (2009), an internationally known psychologist, " empathy is the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people. " Successful leaders use empathy in order to connect with their coworkers. Healing- In order to change and redevelop organizations servant leaders often have to nurse back to health entire groups, institutions, and companies. Persuasion- A servant leader does not rely on intimidation but must encourage people to achieve instead.

Awareness- " Servant leaders are keenly aware of what's going on with people. Awareness of others begins with self-awareness. Goleman holds that the hallmarks of self-awareness are self-confidence, realistic self-

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assessment, and a self-deprecating sense of humor” (as cited in Carroll, 2005, p.

18). Foresight- A servant leader has the ability to look into the future and glean from past experiences in order to see what the ramifications of a decision made in the present are likely to produce. This type of leader is insightful, preemptive and discerning. Conceptualization- A servant leader has the ability to see the forest through the trees. They are able to connect the dots and find relationships when other people see nothing. The strategic mindset is what separates the servant leader from others, and it becomes more important as mental skills become used more frequently and physical labor is down played as the individual moves up the corporate structure. Commitment to Growth- Servant leaders feel people have an incredible aptitude for knowledge and personal development. They are dedicated to the progress and professional evolution of the people who are under their mentorship.

Stewardship- An organization that exercises stewardship holds their companies in custody for the best interest of the general public. Peter Block, who wrote *Stewardship: Putting Service Ahead of Self-Interest*, “ uses stewardship to replace leadership to keep his focus on the next generation and to help us advance our concepts about control and compliance in relation to leadership” (as cited in *Applied Leadership for Effective Coalitions*, 2001). Focus on Community- Creating a sense of community is a vital function for the servant leader. They build a corporate environment that is based on the collective best interest for all. Servant leadership is needed in the workplace because it has so many enefits to offer the company that <https://assignbuster.com/servant-leadership-essay/>

employs it. One of the advantages this style of leadership offers is it can turn a human resources nightmare around. A company that is facing high turnover and having problems with employee retention can change their situation by implementing servant leadership. Research has shown that employees who feel the companies they are working for appreciates them are motivated and viewed as valuable to their company are more likely to continue to stay employed than those who are working in corporate environments where managers use power and force in the workplace.

For instance, according to Pierce (2009) “ data has shown that 89% of managers believe employees leave for more money, while 88% of employees actually leave for reasons having to do with the job, the culture, the manager or the work environment. Almost half of workers report that they do not feel valued by their employers and 71% of workers in the United States rate themselves as either not engaged or actively disengaged. Also 70% of the reasons employees leave their jobs are related to factors that are controllable by the direct supervisor. The effects of high employee turnover lower the odds of a company’s success rate significantly. There are direct factors such as its ability to recruit, choose and train top employees. There are also the other facets such as lower quality customer service, potential loss of high quality future managers and a loss in continuity in organizational projects. The first stage in building and maintaining human capital in a company is to first understand the intrinsic worth great employees bring to an organization.

The second stage is to discover human resource policies that are in sync with the company’s strategy and beliefs. To put this in perspective, the most <https://assignbuster.com/servant-leadership-essay/>

important element of servant leadership is fostering relationships and developing cultures where workers care for each other emotionally and are able to grow on a personal level. This will lead to a corporate organization with high employee dedication. Furthermore, there is reason to believe that a company that utilizes servant leadership will have improved sales versus competitors that use other management styles. According to Ingram, Laforge, Locander, Mackenzie, and Podsakoff (2005), sales leadership has been characterized as actions in a sales organization that motivate others to common goals for the collective good of the organization. It has been shown that a sales leader can truly impact the sales of teams and individuals. Research has shown that sales leadership can influence sales both immediately and circuitously.

There are many factors that affect sales indirectly some of those are; commitment to the company, job satisfaction, occupation anxiety, self-worth, enthusiasm, and amount of exertion applied to the task. Servant leadership leads to higher level of customer response. Thus, this increased consumer response will create a myriad of indirect effects which will lead to increased levels of performance. In their companies, the best leaders get things done. They do this by creating a work place in which employees have better career expectations, are more satisfied with their jobs, more devoted to the company, and show more enthusiasm for more demanding work and are willing to work more intelligently. Studies based on this basis have increased the understanding of the relationship between leadership and performance but these studies tend to skew the landscape because they are based

primarily on what happens inside the company. They forget the effect that the leader may have outside the company, in the marketplace.

In particular, the leader's actions should have an effect on the way a salesperson relates with the customer. As noted authors Chebat and Kollias (2000) state, " if managers treat their employees well, the employees will then reciprocate by treating customers well. Servant leadership helps develop a corporate infrastructure that makes customer service the central focus of the organization which causes increased performance results. Therefore, the leader of the organization should be the main focus when starting a corporate culture that is going to have a customer related emphasis. Servant leadership should be particularly useful when put into practice in a sales-oriented atmosphere. As the originator of servant leadership Greenleaf (2002) asserts, managers who possess servant leadership qualities believe that firms have a moral obligation to serve " those who produce and those who use. In addition, by instilling servant style leadership at the workplace a company is taking a great stride toward making their organization a wonderful place to work.

As serving the needs of the follower becomes the leader's main concern in order to accomplish corporate goals the aspects of servant leadership begin to fall into place. It has been claimed by Levering and Moskowitz (2000) that servant leadership has been practiced in some of America's " best" firms. These " best" companies are the " best" because of the way they care for their employees. In their paper Examining the Impact of Servant Leadership on Sales Force Performance, Jaramillo, Grisaffe, Chonko, and Roberts (2009) state that " human resource practices in these companies are driven by the <https://assignbuster.com/servant-leadership-essay/>

following principles: (1) openness and fairness, (2) camaraderie and friendliness, (3) providing employees with opportunities, (4) instilling pride in their work and their company, (5) giving adequate compensation, and (6) offering security. " As Greenleaf (2002) has written, " leaders have responsibilities that transcend contributing to the economic success of organizations. A servant leader goes through a great deal of trouble to make certain that the needs of others are a priority. Servant leadership is a type of leadership where the good of the many is placed over the egotism of the leader. Servant leadership has also been described by Yu (1998) as a virtuous theory, a virtue being a qualitative characteristic that is part of one's character.

An important principle of servant leadership is that any leader has the authority to create an atmosphere that is conducive to the common good. It takes a leader with nerve to do so, since servant leaders favor the distribution of power rather than the amplification of it. Because of this quality, sales managers are in harmony with, understand, and grow the talents, passions, and welfare of salespeople. The nucleus doctrines of servant leadership are revealed in the scripts of servant leadership which state that all people have self-esteem and value that we are all interrelated, and there is a true reason for human interaction. This type of leadership takes thought, action, and management into account with the welfare of others in mind, at times at the expense of the leader.

Employees are working in a place with a manager who is making certain that their needs are being met. This is what makes these " best" companies such a wonderful place to work. Servant leadership has numerous other

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advantages to offer an organization. The primary benefit of servant leadership lies in its flexibility.

It does not matter what style of leader a person is they can always profit from practicing servant leadership. In a culturally diverse work environment a leader must learn to adopt more than one leadership style in order to be at his or her most efficient. Another reason servant leadership is important to the work environment is its' very nature restrains the extensive misuse of authority. Studies done by researchers Farling, Stone and Winston (1999) have shown that servant leadership produces better results than autocratic leadership in the corporate environment. Furthermore, there is data to support that servant leadership increases the revenue of businesses.

In research done by Dennis Romig where thousands of employees have demonstrated that when the practices of servant leadership are implemented through leadership training in a business, performance has improved by 15 - 20% and work group productivity by 20 -50%. This means an increase in profitability. Fortune magazine's annual rankings of the best 100 corporations to work for show that companies that practice SL consistently rank within the top 10 (e.

g. , Southwest Airlines, Synovus Financial Corporation, TD Industries, and Container Stores). Many other successful businesses, such as the Toro Company and Southwest Airlines are also known for being led by servant leaders.

(as cited in Wong & Davey, 2006) Servant leadership is nothing new; it has been practiced for centuries. Some of the most famous leaders in history
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have been practitioners of servant leadership. It has been said that Buddha was a servant leader. A man who was once a prince but it was not until Buddha shed himself of all his worldly possessions and denounced his title that he found the path of servant leadership. He spent his life living the doctrines of servant leadership without knowing it. Another historical example is Moses. He exercised servant leadership with his people and was known as the servant of God. Moses was a meek and gentle man.

His authority did not come from himself but from a real source of authority... God. Moses was a servant using servant leadership in order to accomplish important leadership goals. Lastly, one of our greatest leaders utilized servant leadership while he was on earth teaching the way. Robert Greenleaf's (1977) description of a servant leader is " One who seeks to draw out, inspire, and develop the best and highest within people from the inside out. The leader does this by engaging the entire team or organization in a process that creates a shared vision, which inspires each person to stretch and reach deeper within himself or herself, and to use everyone's unique talents in whatever way is necessary to independently and interdependently achieve shared vision.

" This is very similar to the way Jesus would spread the word about the Kingdom of God. Jesus gave a great deal of himself teaching his apostles so they could go out and educate the masses. The book of Matthew 13: 52 states, " Then he said unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old. " Jesus is unselfishly sharing his knowledge with others so that they can go out and do the same.

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Is this not the epitome of servant leadership? Servant leadership can be an invaluable aid for companies to help them in their quest to be the best they can be. This paper has shown that servant leadership can improve their organization's retention rates and boost employee morale.

It has also been proven that companies that utilize servant leadership are a better place to work because of the improved work environment that servant leadership cultivates. Furthermore, there is evidence that firms that use servant leadership show higher profits than other companies that use other leadership styles. Servant leadership has been successful for a long time. Moses used it to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt. Where would we be if Jesus had used autocratic leadership? Is it possible the United States could be 82% Muslim faith today instead of Christian ("Largest," 2005) if Jesus had used another method of leadership? Jesus chose servant leadership to pass his knowledge on to his disciples and was successful. If servant leadership worked well for the son of God then it should be more than adequate for the workplace.

Throughout history servant leadership has played a major role in the history of man and it is only appropriate for it to transition into the corporate environment. References Carroll, A. (2005). Servant Leadership. *Nonprofit World*, 23(3), 18-20.

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