Effective Leadership

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What is Leadership?

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2007).

It is the actions of the followers who determine whether a leader is successful.
Many Kinds of Leadership

Technical
• project lead, program manager, NSF co-PI

Informal
• getting a paper accepted, building support for faculty candidate, where to eat lunch…

Professional Activities
• program chair, conference chair, department committee, professional leadership, CRA-W
• standards groups, edit/review

Formal
• Department Head, Dean, Manager
Many Leadership Roles

Within my organization
Leadership = influence
  • “Thought leader” often more important than “chair” or “manager”
  • Peer versus cross-cutting committees & task forces
Strategic leadership: set directions, long-term plans
Tactical leadership: develop & implement

Beyond my organization
Advisor, strategist, liaison
Coordinator, organizer, facilitator
Why Bother?

Influence organization in directions you like.
Have a greater impact through longer lever arm.
Enable “Snowball Effect”
   Once you are seen as an effective leader, more opportunities become available.
Provides personal rewards
How to Become a Leader?

Act like one: Show initiative & vision.
Be trustworthy
  Follow through on commitments in a timely fashion.
  Treat people fairly and with respect.
Demonstrate ability to work with others
Let people know you are interested
Work to acquire qualifications
Find a mentor to help
How to Become a Leader?

Volunteer for visible committees
Don’t wait for someone to ask or invite you
Ask someone to nominate you
Weigh your words
- sound like a leader
- be careful once you’re a leader
How to Become a Leader?

Choose your targets
Groups you already know
  • Be the first to volunteer
Groups you’d like to know
  • Get somebody else to recommend you

Find ways to make yourself valuable
  “Scribes” can have great influence
Suggest activities – and offer to spearhead
So, now you are a leader...
Change

It is okay/great/necessary to change things, but know why you are changing them.

What do you hope to accomplish?
What are the likely and acceptable costs?
How will you know it is working?
Get buy-in as part of the process.

Sometimes the riskiest choice is to try to avoid all risk.
Change

• Spend some time determining who are the biggest influencers in the department
  • Many times if you can get them on your side, then your job is easy
  • If not, it’s a little harder, but still possible
    • Present your facts… to individuals if necessary
  • Sometimes helpful to bring in experts to support your ideas
• Don’t have to be comfortable making tough decisions, but do them fairly
Change

Indirect routes are often faster than direct ones

Most people are leery of major changes

“Pilot” projects are less threatening

• Also leave opportunities for course correction

Gradually extend the reach of the pilot

• At each step, study how to make change palatable

Be sensitive – but not too much – to reactions

Expect 20% (but not 50%) to push back

Sometimes obstacles are a signal to slow down or re-group
Communication

Provide a stable environment so people know how to succeed.
   Allows them to make decisions you would agree with even if they can’t reach you.

Don’t be the bottleneck
   Respect the time of people dependent on you.
   May require increased delegation.

Listen well
   Make sure you can summarize others’ positions to their satisfaction.

Be open to negative feedback
   Otherwise, situations can blow up.
Communication

Learn to be direct when making requests
Not always easy
Check in with the people who work for you to see how everything is going
What’s working, what’s not
Meetings

Plan meetings to be productive
What do you want to accomplish?
What is the most effective way to do that?
A lot of the work of a successful meeting is done in advance.

Avoid putting people on the spot
Find out people’s positions before asking for public comments.
Meetings

• Create a shared agenda, Asana
• Allow everyone to add items
• Determine appropriate times for each topic and keep to it… can always revisit it next meeting
Meetings

Don’t stint on preparation time
Most effective work is done before the meeting
Formulate questions & circulate in advance
“Socialize” key or contentious issues one-on-one
It’s your responsibility to keep things moving
Help others respect the “value” of each meeting hour
  • Calculate hourly cost; remind group how long it took to find a meeting time, etc.
Figure out gentle, but clear ways to interrupt people
Constant Improvement

Learn from watching others
  What do they do that you like? dislike?
  Borrow, but adapt to who you are.
Continue to find mentors
Constant Improvement

• Take advantage of workshops like these
• Learn to delegate… wisely!
• Review last year’s schedule and put notes in calendar to keep on track
Constant Improvement

Make it a goal to learn something new from every meeting (or speaker)

Observe how people react to ideas from A versus B

- What makes the difference? (eloquence? rationale? assertiveness?)

Figure out when/why people change their opinions

- What makes an argument persuasive?
- What prompts people to compromise?

Bottom line: A few people are “natural leaders”

... the rest of us have to learn