

Employability Skills Area: Leadership and Teamwork

Assignment Name: What is a Leader?

Read the following regarding leaders and their characteristics. Complete the Applications at the end.

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 |

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 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

Application:

Give a definition of leadership and cite your source.

Come up with traits or characteristics of a leader that begin with each letter:

L--Loyal

E--Enthusiastic

A--Appreciative

D--Daring

E--Effective

R--Responsible

For example, for the letter “E” you could use the word Effective.

100/100

Great job! I know this one was a bit easier than the last, but I like the words you used beside. Remember that this assignment is just a lead into the next unit.

Clark, D. (1997). *Big dog leadership*. Retrieved from www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leader.html on October 5, 2003.

Penn State. *Youth Leadership Development*. <http://leadership.cas.psu.edu/Training.html>