



Do You Have the Skills of a Servant-Leader?

Assess yourself.

By Darrell Norman Burrell & Brian C. Grizzell

Putting the needs of others in your organization before your own isn't a new concept.¹ But the need for servant leadership has never been more urgent.

Hierarchical approaches, with the leader as the ultimate authority, don't work in today's world. What we need are leaders who, first and foremost, care about their organization and its people. The strategy of putting others first isn't just a prerequisite to mending public trust; it's the best way to motivate workers to new heights of performance.

Are you a servant-leader? These questions will help you decide. They'll also pinpoint ways to develop your servant-leadership skills:

Do you listen well? Do you solicit feedback and advice? Do you seek out your employees' collective wisdom and tribal knowledge? Do you understand the importance of communication as a powerful management tool? Do you listen carefully to gain an understanding of your organization's pulse, climate, and culture?

Do you have empathy? Servant-leaders strive to understand the feelings, needs, and problems of others.

They recognize workers' contributions and unique circumstances.

Can you help people heal? Often when new leaders take over, there are existing employees wounded by poor management, organizational conflict, or unexpected structural changes. Helping others move on, accept change, and heal is an important aspect of effective leadership.

Do you value learning? Servant-leaders are eager to learn new things and help educate others. They understand the importance of personal development for themselves and everyone else in the organization.²

Do you seek out your employees' collective wisdom and tribal knowledge?

Do you have foresight? Do you learn from failure, focusing on what went wrong rather than finding blame? Do you have the courage to change course if realities show you're moving in the wrong direction?

Are you persuasive? Servant-leaders rely on persuasion rather than threats, force, or the power of their position. They seek to con-

vince others rather than coerce compliance. The servant-leader is effective at building loyalty and consensus.

Do you have vision? Do you have a strong belief in your organization's values and integrity? Do you practice big-picture thinking and inspire people with a vision for the future?

Are you flexible? Can you change direction quickly to accommodate the needs of others? Do you nurture an organizational culture that can adapt and respond effectively to unexpected change?

Do you work to gain trust? Effective servant-leaders show character, trustworthiness, responsibility, and accountability for their actions. They have a strong sense of ethics and lead by example.

Are you passionate about helping others develop their potential? Servant-leaders act as mentors, motivators, and coaches, helping remove organizational roadblocks that hinder employee growth.

Are you a community builder? Servant-leaders foster partnership, teamwork, and community. They encourage their employees to collaborate, pool knowledge and resources, develop cohesiveness, and work toward common goals. They act as stewards of the organization's resources. ■

The need for servant leadership has never been more urgent.

Darrell Norman Burrell (dnburrell@excite.com or darrell.burrell@yahoo.com) is a faculty member with Averett University and Mountain State University and a presidential management fellow (www.pmf.gov) with over 15 years of management experience. He has an EdS (Post Master's Terminal Degree) in Higher Education Administration from George Washington University and graduate degrees from National Louis University and Prescott College. Brian C. Grizzell (bgrizzell@aol.com or brian.grizzell@waldenu.edu) is a Ph.D. candidate in Applied Management and Decision Sciences in the College of Management and Technology at Walden University. He holds a BBA in Finance from the College of Business and Global Commerce at Jackson State University and an MBA from the John T. Sperling School of Business at University of Phoenix.

Footnotes

¹The term "servant-leadership" was coined by Robert Greenleaf in a 1970 essay "The Servant as Leader," in which he noted that servant-leadership "begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions.... The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?"

²For more on creating a culture of learning, see these *Nonprofit World* articles at www.snpo.org: "The Nonprofit Executive as Chief Learning Officer" (Vol. 16, No. 2), "Using Training Strategically" (Vol. 14, No. 4), and "Training Programs Need More than Good Information" (Vol. 21, No. 2).

Awaken the Servant-Leader Within You

For a short bibliography of servant-leader resources, contact the Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership, www.greenleaf.org.

Also see these *Nonprofit World* articles at www.snpo.org/members:

- **Leading from Feeling: Coaching Tools for Interpersonal & Organizational Excellence** (Vol. 27, No. 1)
- **Be a Better Leader by Becoming a Better Listener** (Vol. 28, No. 2)
- **Putting Vision to Powerful Use in Your Organization** (Vol. 13, No. 4)
- **A Collaboration Checklist: Ten Questions for Success** (Vol. 24, No. 1)
- **Use Coaching to Retain the Leader's Edge** (Vol. 28, No. 3)
- **Leaders as Midwives Who Birth a New World** (Vol. 28, No. 5)

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If you have any questions, contact Jason Chmura at jchmura@snpo.org.