

# Community Leader Interview

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Of

Mario Fellah

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## Community Leader Interview

I choose to interview Mario Fellah owner of Mario's Pawn shop in Newport News, Virginia because of his leadership skills and effectiveness in the community. Not only is Mario a business owner, he is a leader, educator, trainer, coach, and activist. Mario is an Egyptian [man who that that moved](#) to United States of American more than fifteen years ago. I met Mario over nine years ago. As I watched him, his leadership qualities inspired me to continue to be optimistic about the outcome of our community. Mario is of the Muslim religion; however, he does not envy or condemn any other religion.

[Although](#) Though Mario is not a [citizen](#) Citizen of the United States, he exemplifies the character, love, compassion, of an exemplary leader in our community. According to Schein and Schein (2017), "Demographics play no role in whether or not someone is going to become an exemplary leader (p. Schein & Schein, 2017, pg. 7)."

Mario said, "[being](#) located in a [predominately](#) black community provides an opportunity to help those that live s in poverty. It is not about being rich, black, [or white, it is an opportunity to help](#) and make a positive impact in the lives of others. My race does not make me superior or [inferior to another individual. We all have history and we all have an opportunity to change history.](#)"

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Mario consistently illustrates humility, as well as his desire to promote unity among people. His personality and character exemplify trust and credibility. His believes he pleases God and strives to glorify God in his daily walk and practices. [Philippians 2:3 says](#), "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" ([Phil-2:3-KJV](#)). Mario [maintainsstates](#), "Our religious practices, standards or expectations, may not be

## Community Leader Interview

the same, but God has a plan and purpose for everyone.” Our common cause is the same, that is to please God and demonstrate our love, appreciation, and to our fellowman.

Often times we look for leaders on television; however, leaders are found locally, in supermarkets, malls, communities, churches, and on your job. [Schein and Schein \(2017\) observe that](#), “Leader role models are local. You find them close to where you live and work.” (p. [Schein & Schein, 2017, pg. 10](#)).” Too often local leaders are overlooked because [have we tend to judge and develop](#) preconceived notions about leaders and leadership. People can become narrow minded in their thinking and bias based on the type of clothing people wear, types of hair style, and the way they communicate. [Schein and Schein \(2017\) put it this way](#), “Too often images of who’s a leader and who’s not are all mixed up in preconceived notions about what leadership is and is not” (p. [Schein & Schein, 2017, pg. 5](#)).”

I asked Mario to describe the characteristics of true leadership. Mario stated, “the salient aspect of leadership is being truthful as a leader. Honesty and trustworthy are major characteristics of true leadership. When I leave one of my stores, I expect my employees to treat my customers as I treat them. I set the tone for what I expect from them as employees. Therefore, my employees do not have any reason as to why I should not hold them accountable to the example I set. It is my responsibility to direct my employees and make sure the expectations, vision, and values are clear, respected, and reciprocated. If I promise my employees or customers anything, I must go to the extreme to make it happen. The reason I say ‘must’ is because I want to emphasize how important it is to me and my company, that I am faithful to my word.”

## Community Leader Interview

Mario's response is a great example of Schein ~~and Schein's (2017)~~'s perspective of keeping your problems. [The authors argue,](#)

“Problems arise when people have different perceptions of the importance of both your word and the circumstances required to justify not keeping your promise (~~p. Schein & Schein, 2017, pg. 85~~).” Mario understands the problems that could possibly surface if he or his company is not faithful to their commitment. Not only will it affect his company, it will affect the community because it could ruin his reputation of being an honest man. [Schein and Schein \(2017\) observe that,](#) “People become cynical, disenchanted, and downright weary when leaders back away from or don't do what they are asking of others” (~~Schein & Schein, 2017, p. g. 112~~).

Mario stated, “I don't think I am a great speaker, ~~;~~ however, I am a great listener. I care about others, how they feel, what they think, and their lives. People need leaders that care. If leaders listen to their followers, they will learn a lot about their followers, their passion, their dreams. Good listening skills are important, even if you can't change their situation.” This became very interesting to me because Schein ~~and Schein (2017) speak spoke~~ about effectively listening [as well,](#) —“So often leadership is associated with inspirational speaking, but people often miss the fact that making the human connection requires exceptional listening (~~p. Schein & Schein, 2017, pg. 64~~).”

## Community Leader Interview

I asked Mario, “what positive impact ~~did he think he had on others. His response was, do you have on others?~~” Mario’s proclamation is, “One day I want my employees to acquire this business. I want to retire and possibly return home to help others in my country. I would like to teach some of my countrymen how to manage a successful business.” As Mario expressed himself, I could feel the excitement and sincerity of his conversation. His concern ~~ed~~ for others was deeply felt and appreciated. As we were talking, Mario would look me straight in the eyes. His body language accommodated his message. His desire to see others succeed ~~is was~~ commendable. I began to reflect on Schein & Schein’s (2017) statement about giving others support. They say, “They blossom when they have a leader who believes in them and gives them support and encouragement” (Schein & Schein, 2017, p. 71). “Leadership is about training others to become leaders. The world can not function without leadership. The Hebrews could not come out of Egypt without a great leader without the zeal, passion, and integrity ~~that as~~ Moses possessed. The Civil Rights law would not exist without a great leader such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Mario thinks people value and trust his leadership.

Additionally, I asked ~~My next question to~~ Mario ~~to was~~, “discuss ~~his your~~ beliefs, values, norms, and basic assumptions that drives ~~his your~~ business and leadership.” Mario replied, “morality, honesty, integrity, and enjoying life are values that I esteem. I don’t think having a fancy building, driving expensive cars, living in mansions, and luxurious living is necessary. Living peaceful is pragmatic approach to life and it is important to me. Wealth can be distributed in such a manner that everyone can be successful. Nevertheless, it takes motivation, commitment, and an intrinsic drive to get started day after day. Smart work and hard work will eventually produce positive results.” Honesty is a strong value for Mario’s pawn shop. Integrity

## Community Leader Interview

is the driving force that encourages his customers to return. He treats every customer with phenomenal hospitality. ~~My~~ ~~By~~ observation is that his customers and employees appear to be happy. His most junior ~~least senior~~ employee has been with him for three and a half years. He does not have much turnover because he says ~~id~~ he strives to make his employees happy by being concerned about their needs, coaching, and maintaining a pleasant atmosphere in the workplace.

Every business has complexities, face challenges, atrocities, and occasionally faces disappointments ~~occasionally~~. There are many external realities that affect s-business success, such as government intervention or legislation. Mario states, “I face each day thinking I have an opportunity to help someone. If I can remain positive, I can face my challenges with an optimistic mentality. I have become wiser, stronger, and resilient because of my challenges. My good and bad has worked for my good. There is always opportunity to be better. Challenges test my character, personality and values. I refuse to give up.” It is this type of mentality that drives Mario to be a successful and impactful leader. As he politely goes through the community meeting people, he is highly respected and viewed as an asset to the community. Schein and Schein (2017) maintain that, “Challenges cause you to come face-to-face with your- self. They are rather harsh ways of reminding you of what’s important, what you value, and where you want to go. Many people have experienced life-threatening, even torturous circumstances, and have found ways to turn them into tests of strength and determination (~~Schein & Schein, 2017p.~~ pg. 94). Mario’s resilience stands out because he has faced many challenges that would cause many to give up. His passion for others excels mediocrity.

## Community Leader Interview

[As stated above.](#)

Mario ~~stated he~~ has faced several challenges. However, the one that stands out the most is when the city official opposed his business thinking it would be bad for the community. Nevertheless, he has demonstrated his ability to enhance the community by supporting several educational campaigns, supporting campaigns for constituents running for office, and encouraging new businesses to come to the area. [Schein & Schein \(2017\) state](#), “It takes determination and strength to deal with the adversities of life and leadership. You can’t let the set-backs get you down or the roadblocks get in your way. You can’t become overly discouraged when things don’t go according to plan” ([Schein & Schein, 2017p., pg. 99](#)).

[Mario ended the interview by saying](#), “America has given me an opportunity, and that was my desire. I am grateful because I was willing to prove myself once given the opportunity to strive in America. I am sure others can do the same” ~~stated Mario.~~ -Mario’s leadership will cause others to progress as they evaluate themselves and maximize the opportunities that comes available.

### References

Schein, E. H., & Schein, P. (2017). *Organizational culture and leadership*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

King James Bible (Phil. 2:3 KJV).