

Leadership Inventory

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Personal Mission Statement

My personal mission statement is to be committed to furthering human rights and well-being in under-resourced communities, especially with and on behalf of women. In thinking through my own leadership style and skill set, it is important to identify my personal mission and values. One core value of my life is the readiness to hear and respond to the needs of people in vulnerable positions in the aftermath of a natural or human disaster, personal hardship or crisis, or systematic racism. Another core value of mine is to work collaboratively with communities and teammates to address agreed upon issues and respond to injustice and need by leveraging available aid, community and individual supports and skills. As a macro social work practitioner I have a strong commitment to justice and I desire to develop healthy leadership skills in order to see positive and holistic change reached within the lives of individuals, families, communities, and nations. My unique leadership vision is to combine micro and macro levels of social work practice in order to fight systemic injustice, help communities and individuals thrive after adversity and disaster through empowerment and advocacy.

Strengths, Limitations, and Values

One of my limitations as a leader is my desire to be well liked and appreciated by those whom I am leading. This is a limitation when I am not able to overcome the temptation to follow what is popular or the status quo in order to take an intervention to a new level or insist on an unpopular yet wise plan of action. In leadership there is a principle of stewarding which, I believe, involves managing resources wisely and also making decisions that will see the most amount of good happen with the resources accessible. Disagreement and conflict on a team is inevitable, therefore I want to balance my limitation of wanting to always liked with being willing to make decisions that best serve the task at hand. According to Myers Briggs personality

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test, I type as ENTP and two common weakness of this type is intolerance and dislike of practical matters. The ENTP is more of a visionary leader who enjoys to brainstorm and think through the best possible solutions (*Debater (ENTP) Personality*, 2022). With this weakness in mind, I know that I need to surround myself with people with skill sets that are more fitted with a capacity to handle the micro, detail orientated decisions that are necessary to make any program or intervention work.

Based on the strengths of my Myers Briggs test which are flexible thinking, little attachment to tradition, charismatic personality, and communication skills, my style of leadership could be characterized largely by vision casting and team building. The combination of charisma and facilitating effective communication within the team setting allows me to lead by asking for everyone's buy in. I want everyone to be equally invested in the goals established and be able to bring energy, skills, and passion into their work. I find fulfillment when my values and mission align with my work; sub-sequentially my leadership style reflects this value. My lack of attachment to tradition allows me to lead with an open mind, be able to take in the viewpoints of others and stay flexible. I have grown in this area under leadership that I experienced to be too headstrong and lacking in sincere listening skills. In the team setting, lack of ability for the leader to listen to individuals and stay flexible in their direction creates a more authoritarian environment and sense of hierarchy. As a leader my ideal for leadership structure would tend towards flat leadership style in order to incorporate everyone's ideas and various skill sets into decision making and service implementation.

In Appendix B, de Groot summarizes different learning styles including thinker, reflector, sensor, and actor (2016, pp. 229). After self-reflection, I would say that my learning type is sensing. I gravitate to opportunities where I can be active in the learning process through

hands on training and tasks. Another characteristic of being a sensor that I relate to is that I get excited about new ideas, brainstorming, and any role-playing processes. On the other hand, it is hard for me to come to conclusions when the process is more retrospective. This is an importance awareness to keep in mind because others within the team will be thinkers, reflectors, and actors. It will be important for me to grow in understanding how to incorporate different learning and problem solving preferences in order to not just rely on my strengths, but defer to the needs of others as well.

One of my values is clear communication especially during conflict. De Groot talks about how subtle or obvious forms of resistance can contribute to the overall stress of leaders. It is important to know how to effectively manage resistance and opposition whether they show up in passive or more aggressive ways with the team. My immediate reaction is to want to minimize the resistance by accommodating the person's wishes as quickly and smoothly as possible, however De Groot's suggestion is to give time to consider the resistant individual's story and perspective. In this way resolution could come through an understand of their values and position rather than in behavior modification which could increase tension and inhibit resolution (2016, pp. 176). My skills as a leader will be strengthened when I can champion and care for relationships during a time of resistance and in the midst of conflict.

Biases and Privilege

In processing who I am as a leader, I know that it is important for me to acknowledge that as a white woman, I have benefitted from white privilege as a member of the majority culture. As a social worker I want to hear from and work within a diverse group of people from many different backgrounds in order to best serve communities. Because of institutional racism, there are many systems within the government and country that have exasperated inequity among

minority groups. In a commitment to relearn history and practice as a social worker from the perspective that racism still exists and has massive implications on communities and the U.S. overall, I want to stay aware of how to empower others into positions of leadership. I want to be the first to recognize when there is a lack of representation from minority ethnicity groups within leadership boards, authority positions, etc. It is likewise important for me to have an ongoing commitment to identifying biases, especially subconscious ones, and working to educate myself on them. One bias that I can identify is the belief that higher education is the best way to achieve opportunities after high school. An article from the Harvard Business Review states that “we typically develop unconscious biases as a result of the things we were taught and the observations we made throughout our childhoods and adolescence — at home, at school, in conversations with friends, and through the media we consumed” (Acton, 2022). I have identified biases in the assumptions that I have of certain groups of people, such as that people experiencing homelessness don’t work, and take steps to correct my understanding. One of the most effective ways for correcting biases is through seeking out people from the groups that I find biases towards and hear their stories.

Leadership Theories and Skills

The leadership theory that I am most attracted to is the responsive leadership theory where leadership is defined by “inspir[ing] the attitudes and behaviors of others to engage in value based and purpose critical efforts in order to accomplish a set of shared objectives” (De Groot, 2016b). It’s important to me for my leadership style to be characterized by inspiration because I want to grow professionally and learn and exercise new skills. In order to keep growing, I want to be leader that knows how to delegate, empower, and pass off responsibility and leadership opportunities to others. I want to be a leader that creates and inspires others to be

leaders as well and use their creativity to pursue the greatest good possible. I believe that trust is central to inspiration. Trust is built by the ongoing congruence between words and actions.

“Trust in a supervisor will often lead to reciprocal behaviors and positively affect work behavior outcomes and is linked with greater productivity of employees (De Groot, 2016, pp. 35). In order to cultivate trust in a leadership position it is crucial to maintain my personal integrity and commitment to the social work core values. Developing healthy relationships on the team and showing empathy and care for everyone is as important in building trust and a safe working environment. “A leader’s ability to identify and display appropriate emotions to accommodate the needs of members assists those members with their own social and emotional regulation” (De Groot, 2016, pp. 37). In order to lead with healthy and appropriate expression of emotions, it is important for me to pursue healthy rhythms of self care and accept supervision.

From the Key Performance Motivators Scale (KPMS) in De Groot’s book, I discovered that vision and values of the organization, personal and professional growth, quality relationships, and results are my top four performance motivators. Having personal congruence with the objectives and heart of an organization is crucial for me to incorporate passion and energy into my work. When building and leading a team – it will be a priority for me to gauge everyone’s individual and therefore overall collective buy-in and personal levels of commitment to the task at hand and overall mission. As a leader it is important for me to partner and lead people that also want to engage in the work with their heart and their head.

I have been influenced by inspiration leaders who have possessed a certain degree of charisma. I think that charisma is super helpful as a leadership trait, however I have found it to be hollow and disappointing if charisma is accompanied with subtle or overt dominating characteristics. The theory of servant leadership is attractive to me because of the value of

leading by example. As a leader when I set expectations for the group to observe, I also want to be submitted to that standard. Servant leaders do not hold onto power or lord it over others, but they use their position to serve the team and lead by example. I think that humility shown in the ability to listen to others and keep an open mind and maintain teachability as a leader is very challenging to find. It's a combination of qualities that I would strive to maintain in a leadership position.

Lastly, maintaining a strengths focus in leadership is an irreplaceable skill in social services, yet it can be hard to maintain because of the angle that the work can take in a problem focused environment. In leadership, possessing the skill to reframe reality from negative to positive will be influential in helping to achieve a strengths focus (De Groot, 2016, pp. 135). As a leader the principle of looking for strengths in each situation needs to be implemented. This could look like the skill of being able to acknowledge the positive qualities of an employee's work and share appreciation for their hard work and progress. This skill could be exercised in leading a macro solutions meeting where the resources with a community system need to be assessed after a natural disaster. As a leader I want to highlight the strengths that I see and regularly lead the team in findings strengths for each intervention.

References

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