

CHALLENGE

A Herff Jones IMPACT Resource For Students

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DECEMBER CHALLENGE

What Is Leadership?

LEADERSHIP

Leader! Yes, the title sounds great and it is certainly a goal worth having, but it requires hard work.

Every day more is demanded of leaders whether it is a person in government or the student body president. Many times little has been done to prepare those leaders for the leadership position that they now hold. To paraphrase Shakespeare, some people are born leaders, some achieve leadership, and others have leadership thrust upon them. By whatever means a person attains a leadership position, he or she needs the tools to be successful.

It has been discovered and rediscovered by many people throughout the years that leadership is not reserved for only a few talented people. It is a process that ordinary people use to get the best from themselves and others. When a person becomes a leader amazing things happen.

Leadership is a verb, not a noun. Leadership is an action, not a position. People with no formal

leadership training are excellent leaders.

To lead is to show the way to go by going in advance. To lead is to guide or direct a course of action. To lead is to influence the opinion or behavior of others. Everyone can be a leader regardless of the title or role.

This begins with self-leadership from within and moves outward to influence, guide, support, and lead others. The process of being a leader is the same as being a highly effective human being. Leadership development is personal development.

It would be easy if anyone could become a leader by following a simple set of steps. Yes, there are steps that will help along the road to leadership but much of it will come from within.

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Leaders have:

1. **Individual characteristics which people value and recognize**
2. **Welcome opportunities to lead**
3. **Followers who are willing to take direction from them and help to achieve success**

There are five essential qualities that a leader must possess to be successful:

1. **A leader must have courage.** It is not that a courageous person is never afraid and does not have doubts. Everyone is afraid at one time or another. Courage is the will to press on, to do what is necessary, and what is right, and to overcome obstacles even when afraid.
2. **A leader must have confidence.** Self-doubt is that little voice in your head that says, "You cannot make the team or be Homecoming Queen or be elected a class officer because you are not good enough."

Confidence is an unshakable belief in yourself that you can make happen what you want to happen. Confidence allows you to keep trying until you get better, to seek help and advice, to ignore those who tell you that you will never succeed. Confidence is infectious. If you believe in yourself, others will believe in you too. Having confidence does not mean that you will win every race or election but that you will continue to try.

3. A leader must have concentration.

Concentration has two parts - persistence and focus. Persistence is the unwillingness to quit until the goal is achieved. Persistence does not require talent only determination. Focus is the ability to stay on track, organize oneself, and reduce distractions. Leaders have the ability to separate what must be done immediately.

4. A leader must have passion. Leaders are able to inspire others because they have a passion for what they do and what they believe in. They are enthusiastic, upbeat, and optimistic. Even when things are not going well, they can instill in others the belief that together they can make a difference. Great leaders are committed which means throwing yourself into whatever you do with everything you have.

5. A leader must have a strong sense of values.

Values are enduring standards of behavior. They are the things upon which a reputation is built. They help us to determine the people we can count on, how people will react in different situations, and whom we want as friends.

Those who carry a leadership title are many times the ones who get the praise. But a title no more makes a person a leader than the absence of a title keeps a person from being a leader. True leaders act within a defined vision, know what will create success, and are willing to contribute to that success. By continually giving, they themselves gain.



Consider the following. How do leaders best create visions of the future?

- 1. Being passionate about their goals**
- 2. Focusing on the future**
- 3. Helping define the team's values**
- 4. Helping create clear choices**
- 5. Effectively leading the change process**
- 6. Challenging the status quo**
- 7. Helping the teams to set high goals**



There are three stages in the journey to leadership....

- 1. Skill development – know what to do**
- 2. Behavior development – walk the talk**
- 3. Authenticity – be comfortable with your role.**



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