

The Effectiveness of Servant Leadership in Bringing about Change

Daniel Tureman

A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for graduation  
in the Honors Program  
Liberty University  
Spring 2013

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

---

Colleen McLaughlin, Ph.D.  
Thesis Chair

---

Troy Matthews, Ed.D.  
Committee Member

---

Kendrick Brunson, D.B.A.  
Committee Member

---

Brenda Ayres, Ph.D.  
Honors Director

---

Date

### Abstract

Servant Leadership is unique when compared to other styles of leadership. The idea that a leader should serve his followers is a paradoxical concept that confuses many people. Even so, when trying to produce change, servant leadership is still an effective way to motivate followers. Its unique emphasis on concern for people's well-being can bolster its success for creating change and leave one's followers changed professionally and personally. This paper seeks to demonstrate how servant leadership differs from other types of leadership as well as how to produce change within an organization and how a servant leader can be effective in procuring this change.

## The Effectiveness of Servant Leadership in Bringing about Change

### **Introduction**

It was one of the strangest nights anyone would ever experience. A group of friends had gathered for the celebration of an annual holiday. They all congregated around their leader of three years and waited patiently for the servants of the house to begin the pre-meal ritual. They had enjoyed many meals together but something about this one felt different. Their leader then made a movement. He took off his outer clothes and began performing the foot washing ceremony. Suddenly, one by one, they realized what was taking place; their leader was placing Himself below them and acting as a servant to them. This was not how it was supposed to be! They should be the ones who were washing His feet. They felt more than mildly uncomfortable and one of them even jumped up in protest, but their leader would not allow His act of humble service to be refused. He was there to serve them this night; He would set an example for them to follow. The activities of this night had a profound effect on His followers. After this night, they would reflect on it many times and even apply the same type of practices in their own leadership roles. The leader knew what He was doing, even though His followers thought it was crazy. After experiencing that night, they would never be the same; they were changed for the better. Their leader used a style of leadership that not only served them, but also gave them the model for their future ministries.

The example above is, of course, the example of Jesus Christ from the Gospel of John, chapter 13. Whether a person believes in Him as the Son of God or not, one must recognize His proficiency as a leader. Jesus was a leader who was true to His word, never put Himself first, and was willing to sacrifice for His followers (even to the point of death

on a cross). He constantly taught His followers His ways and set a perfect example for them to follow. He took simple men and molded them into bold leaders who were tremendously loyal to His teachings, many even dying as martyrs for what they believed. After Jesus left this earth, His followers started one of the most influential movements in history. Christianity is still around today and shows no signs of disappearing. Jesus was a true servant leader, and a prime example to how leading while serving can motivate others to make necessary changes.

This approach to leadership is a powerful and impactful one. Leadership, in general, can have a profound impact on those around a person, but there is something unique when one chooses to serve a person when they are above them in the chain of command; its effects are different than any other leadership style. It has the capacity to transform followers in an incredibly unique way. A person with the experience of working for a leader using this approach will likely exclaim how great of an experience it is. The aforementioned attitude towards leading, commonly called servant leadership, has the capacity to not only effectively bring about change within individual followers, but also within an entire organization. Organizational change is difficult and will not come about immediately, but one may be surprised at how an entire organization can begin to change when the ones in charge start serving others.

### **Definition of Leadership**

Throughout history, leadership has been defined many times and in many different ways. It can be characterized as “social influence,” or “leaving a mark,” or more profoundly “showing the way and influencing the behavior and others by ideas and deeds” (Manning & Curtis, 2012, p. 2). Leadership must be understood as more than

simply managing. Management is often termed as the authority with the main intention of providing order and consistency for an organization. Leadership, on the other hand, requires much more than just setting things in place and letting them run their course. Leadership involves such tasks as establishing and guiding the vision of an organization, empowering subordinates, demonstrating competencies and even excellence with necessary skills, motivating, teaching, coaching, and being an example for all to follow (Manning, 2012, p. 12). One expert and leadership consultant contrasted management and leadership by stating:

Leadership is: people more than projects; movement more than maintenance; art more than science; intuition more than formula; vision more than procedure; risk more than caution; action more than reaction; relationships more than rules; who you are more than what you do. (Maxwell, 2005, p. 113)

This may seem like a lot for one person to accomplish, and that would be a fair assessment. Leadership is not easy, but it is necessary. Practically any major advancement in the history of civilization has had a leader at its helm. Inversely, the decline or decay of many nations has been the result of poor leadership practices or even, in some cases, the lack of leadership (Manning, 2012, p. 3).

### **Leadership Perspectives**

The techniques and styles of leadership are countless. Leadership trends and practices have been studied and taught in many different ways. There is no single right way of leading. Each style of leadership has its own benefits and flaws and each can bring either success or failure. There are three basic perspectives to apply when analyzing

leadership: the competency perspective, the behavioral perspective, and the contingency perspective (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010, p. 361). .

The competency perspective states there are certain traits or qualities that all great leaders possess (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010, p. 361). Examples of these traits include personality, self-concept, drive, integrity, leadership motivation, knowledge, intelligence, and emotional intelligence. These characteristics sound like a great repertoire for a leader to have. Of course it is good for a leader to have a strong personality; to know who he is; to be motivated and to want to motivate others; to be a man of character; to know what he is doing; and to control how he handles himself. This is common sense. One must be careful when analyzing and evaluating this perspective, however. It cannot be proven that a leader must hold all of these traits, or that a leader without some of them cannot have success. For instance, different cultures will require different competencies. While there may be some similarities in the proficiencies, there will also be equally as many differences (Gentry & Sparks, 2012, p. 17). It can also be stated that leadership is too complicated to be able to pinpoint a definite inventory of required traits (McShane, 2010, pp. 362-64).

The behavioral perspective ascribes that leadership hinges on how the leader acts or what specific deeds he does. How the leader performs in his position and how he reacts to situations can determine his effectiveness with his followers. This perspective divides behaviors into two separate categories: people-oriented behaviors and task-oriented behaviors. People-oriented behaviors are those pertaining to treating employees in certain manners. Things such as listening to employee feedback, supporting employees' interests and ideas, and having a concern for the needs of subordinates all fall

into this category. Task-oriented behaviors are actions such as enforcing rules, assigning projects, and pushing performance goals. Both of these behavior orientations have their place in leadership. Each has its upsides and downfalls. There is no way to determine if one orientation of leadership is better than the other. In the end it must be recognized that a leader will need to apply different levels of orientation depending on the situation (McShane, 2010, pp. 364-65).

The third and most flexible perspective is the contingency perspective (Worth, 2012, pp. 109-110). The contingency perspective gives weight to the idea of a leader altering his leadership style based on certain situations. It can be difficult, but with many circumstances come many opportunities for a different approach to leadership. In fact, a leader may need to change his style often more than not. The main style under this category of leadership is the path-goal leadership theory, which is defined as “the study of how leader behaviors influence employee perceptions of expectancies (paths) between employee effort and performance (goals)” (McShane, 2010, p. 365). There are four different styles often suggested to accommodate different situations. These four styles are directive (focusing on tasks and clarifying what needs to be done), supportive (showing concern and care for employees), participative (allowing followers significant roles in decision making), and achievement oriented (focusing on performance and production). These styles can be applied to various different situations as needed by a leader to have great success. The path-goal leadership theory also aligns with servant leadership, as it allows focus of leaders on support and provision for employees (2010, pp. 365-66).

### **Servant Leadership**

Servant leadership is a unique style of leadership. It is not leadership from selfish ambition or has anything pertaining with self at all, but instead, it is leadership that focuses on serving those who are around a leader to accomplish the necessary tasks (Worth, 2012, p. 110). Why would a leader be the one serving others? Usually, the one lower on the chain of command is the one expected to serve; this is how society expects leadership to work. To servant leaders, however, the paradoxical concept of serving from a leadership role seems just the natural way it should work. Servant leaders often feel they are “called to serve” (Manning, 2012, p. 147). They tend to care for people and naturally want to help and serve them. They do not seek their own good, but instead try to meet the needs of those around them as well as lead the company in the right direction. It is important to clarify that servant leaders are not just pawns that employees can use to get what they want. Servant leaders are firmly grounded in achieving goals, while serving those around them as often as it is helpful to achieving those goals. With that being stated, serving others can be helpful in almost any situation. Having an impact on the employees’ lives will build the leader’s reputation and trust with them. Instead of staying in their office all day or getting an assistant to handle situations, servant leaders will often be seen out on the office floor communicating personally with staff to achieve this idea (Maxwell, 2005, p. 213). While this may take time and effort, it has a worthwhile impact on the subordinates. With this attitude, servant leaders often easily gain the confidence of their subordinates; he becomes someone worth following (2012, pp. 147-148).

There is recognizable tension between being a leader while at the same time as being a servant. It is not part of human nature to put others first, especially when those

others are the ones on a lower level of a company. Many leaders are in leadership for the sole reason of having the sense of authority over others. It is one of the perks of a leadership position. With this authority, however, come many potential pitfalls. Such consequences include pride, arrogance, self-reliance, selfishness, cruelty, and misuse of power can all contribute to the downfall of a leader (Tidball, 2012, p. 39). There has been little success resolving this tension. The closest resolution to this tension is to look at leadership as through the eyes of a parent. Parents are the head of the household in that they make major decisions and guide the family in the right direction, but are also the family's servant; supporting, encouraging, and seeking the best interest of the members of the family (2012, p. 46).

In addition to the family metaphor, servant leadership can also be closely compared to coaching. Most everyone has experienced or knows what it is like to have a good coach or a bad coach. A good coach can push a person to reach his full potential and succeed, while a poor coach can hinder both of those notions. A good coach, and a good leader, will encourage those around him to "close the gap between potential and performance" (Stanley, 2003, p. 122). The servant leader has a strong concern for others and wants to see them succeed. He will do his best to correct necessary shortcomings and help others reach their potential, whether by service or by effective communication. Servant leaders are willing to help out in any way possible.

Servant leaders can also be compared to shepherds. Shepherds know at all times what the condition of their flock is; they know each and every sheep in their flock and tend to them daily. The shepherd makes sure his sheep are not in danger and are in a safe place, thus establishing trust and commitment. He also uses his staff to direct and his rod

to correct. The staff was a large pole with a curved loop on the end. It was used to guide the sheep in certain directions and also to make sure they stay where they need to be. The rod was a smaller pole that was generally used to punish the sheep. The shepherd would hit his flock firmly with his rod to correct their errant behavior. The sheep become familiar with the rod and staff and learn to respect the shepherd's use of them greatly. (Leman & Pentak, 2004, pp. 115-117). Servant leaders get to know their followers and know how to best serve them. Whether it be applying stronger discipline or simply lighter correction, the servant leader understands how to properly motivate employees. He sets them up to succeed and makes sure his followers trust him by being of upright standing with each of them. He is willing to demonstrate the hard work in his position to make it apparent he cares for his people and for the task that needs to be accomplished. He has a sense for guiding people in the right direction and is not afraid to correct an employee when he has strayed from the right course.

### **Producing Change**

With the idea of the rod and staff in mind, organizations must be ready to employ these tools at all times necessary. An organization rarely sustains itself by keeping with the old way of doing things. Many times within an organization, change must take place. Change is an elusive idea. It is uncomfortable and difficult to adapt into one's life. Most people do not enjoy change (Manning, 2012, p. 360). Organizations must improve, new leaders are hired, competition becomes fierce; these are all reasons an organization cannot stay static. Producing change is not as simple as deciding it needs to happen. Bringing about change, especially throughout a large organization, can be an arduous, time-consuming task considering change may need to happen to a wide variety of

organizational mainstays (2012, p. 360). There must be careful planning, great leadership, and hard work in order to effectively implement change into an organization (2012, p. 362).

### **Steps to Produce Change**

There are many different suggestions of how to bring about change as a leader. One of the most renowned books on leading change is a book of the very title by Kotter (1996). Kotter lists eight steps to producing this change in organizations. While he does not speak to leading this change as a servant leader, it is beneficial to understand how an organization is led through a time of change to better understand how to lead it as a servant leader. Kotter has some great practical advice for any leader desiring to produce some sort of change in his employees or organization.

The first step suggested by Kotter is to establish a sense of urgency. People in the organization must realize the problem is real and that change must occur for the organization to continue to move in the right direction. Some people working in organizations have a sense of complacency and are happy with the way things are. Changing the desire to keep things the same is not an easy task and everyone must understand why this change is so urgent. To increase urgency, the company must remove any idea of complacency. One avenue Kotter suggests to accomplish this is to “vastly increase the amount of external performance feedback everyone gets” (Kotter, 1996, p. 42). This could mean bringing in an outside party to do individual evaluations of performance. It could also be an interdepartmental review. Kotter mentions that whatever the decided move is, it needs to be bold. To add boldness, feedback given may need to be harsh or brutally honest. There should be consequences for employees not willing to

respond to the feedback and make the appropriate changes. The urgency of the change created must be serious and be spread throughout the entire company (p. 42-44).

The second step in the process is to create a group that will carry out the changes by modeling the behavior. No one person can change an organization, especially if the company is of considerable size. To help guide the change, leaders must create a team that are credible, trustworthy, and have position power. The team must also understand the end goal. The goal must appeal to both the mind and the heart, make logical sense, as well as resonate with the employees as important. A group of people should be selected that believe in the change and desire to bring it about. The group can be composed of people from all levels of the organization, from the CEO to the janitor. The team of change must also establish trust in the change being made by the organization being necessary. Creating this mindset in the employees can be done by openly talking about the change and the vision behind it (Kotter, 1996, p. 66).

After setting up the team with the role of guiding the change, the vision and strategy to accomplish it must be firmly established and developed. A vision statement does not have to be elaborate; in fact, it is better to have a vision that can be explained in less than five minutes. The vision may take time to develop, but it is necessary. The team of change must take the idea of the vision and work it out to where it is a feasible vision that still creates the needed change. The vision must also not be established by just one person, but rather the effort of a team working together to create the perfect statement or idea for change. It must resonate with a person's mind and heart to be a strong vision statement. Some people may become impatient but leaders should take the time to establish the vision for the change before going any further in the change process (Kotter,

1996, p. 81). With the vision established, the strategy must also be decided upon. To do this effectively, the company should strategically plan. This involves analyzing where the company currently is, where the vision, mission, and goals want the organization to be, and the practical steps of how the company can get there. Strategic planning can be a tiresome process, but it is necessary to the success of implementing change. The company will not reach the desired state without charting its course first (Worth, 2012, p. 169).

The next step is to communicate this change vision, which can be done in numerous ways. The leader should get creative with how the vision is pursued. By engaging in self-sacrifice or risk-taking, the leader shows the vision is worth fighting for. In addition, displaying personal confidence in the steps taken towards the vision can bolster the group's confidence in achieving it (Worth, 2012, p. 113). Kotter explains the vision should be heard often and in multiple ways. Memos, letters, and emails, as well as meetings on smaller levels can all inform employees of what will be happening. By adequately informing them, the employees will have time to interact with the vision and get used to what is being proposed. The managers must also begin modeling the ideal behavior so the employees can begin to feel more connected to both their leader and the vision. The vision must be communicated in a clear and concise manner. There should be no large words or jargon aimed at confusing or manipulating the employees. It should create a clear picture of what the future will look like after this change occurs (1996, p. 90).

After establishing the vision, it is time to empower the employees to start accomplishing it. To properly empower employees, one must first make the current

organizational structures more compatible to the system of intended employee behavior for accomplishing the vision's goals. The information and personnel systems must be aligned to the goal and vision as well. If organizational structures or systems do not allow the desired change to come about (by not being flexible with allowing new implementation of ideas) it will greatly deter the organization from progressing. An example of this might be confronting supervisors who are not serious enough about the change vision. If the person in charge is not actively involved in implementing the vision and empowering the employees, he should not be in a position of authority. A leader who does not believe in what he is trying to do is just as much a hindrance as organizational structures or systems. It can be a struggle for leaders to empower their employees, but with the right mindset and hard work, it can lead to more effective change (1996, p. 115). John Maxwell, a renowned expert on leadership, explains there are seven elements helpful to a vision being successfully transferred. These seven facets are clarity, connection, purpose, goals, challenges, stories and passion. Clarity is one aspect all leaders must strive to attain in all areas of communication if they want to have any type of success. Maxwell brings up the point, "if the vision isn't clear, the people aren't clear," aspiring people must understand what they are doing (2005, p. 249). Connection of the vision refers to its ties to the past and the present. Although the vision of a company is primarily set in the future, how it is related to the history of an organization can "validate those people who have worked hard and sacrificed to build what already exists" (p. 250).

Purpose is the third element and it is a simple one. A statement that sums up this category quite well is, "Purpose tells them (followers) why they should go." Having purpose communicated in the vision makes it easier for the group of followers to stay

focused and make necessary changes when threats to the desired future state arise (2005, p. 250). Establishing goals is the next ingredient to communicating a strong vision. This idea is very similar to Kotter's next step in the change development of generating short-term wins, which turns the vision into a process that can be more attainable, as opposed to just trying to achieve the big idea right away. Making the vision challenging is also suggested by Maxwell. He declares, "If vision doesn't require people to stretch, they may wonder if it is worthy of their dedication" (p. 2005, 251). Setting up a challenging vision can help push the motivated followers to grow, while at the same time, causing the uncommitted ones to drop out. Stories are also a helpful part of communicating the vision of a leader. Stories of those involved in the process of making the vision happen or stories of people who have accomplished similar tasks makes the vision seem "relational and warm." It can make the vision come to life and help gain the assistance of those still on the fence (2005, p. 251). Passion is the last component of communicating a vision effectively. Passion is the motor behind the vehicle referred to as vision. Passion is also an aspect, once seen in one person, feasibly transmitted to others by sheer hard work. Putting in the extra work and the fighting through the tough times can motivate others and can spread the passion throughout an entire company (2005, p. 252).

As mentioned earlier, the next step to help establish a sense of change is generating short-term wins in the process. Short-term wins help keep the change rolling; it makes the hard times worth it. Employees being rewarded for their successes in the change process are more likely to have better morale and motivation to persevere. Short-term wins also help make sure the vision is happening and assuring others it was not just a well thought out idea that never came to fruition. These short-term wins have a great

effect on the people involved. It encourages the people in charge of their hard work being worth it, turns apathetic employees into active helpers, and makes it difficult for others to be cynical towards the project. Everyone needs some encouragement from time to time (Kotter, 1996, p. 123). Some examples of short terms wins would be a successful realignment of employees, reaching a certain production level, or anything else identified as moving the company or group towards a greater realization of the vision. Anything progressing the group in the right direction deserves to be celebrated. These wins can be either easy or challenging, as both have their place in producing this change (p. 127).

After the short-term goals are established, the long-term resolve must take place. At this stage in the process, the company's change gets even tougher. Opposition to change will most likely increase and must be met with even greater perseverance (Kotter, 1996, p. 143). There are three strategies to managing resistance to change: force change strategy, educative change strategy, and rational change strategy. Force change strategy is as simple as it sounds; it is giving orders and imposing change by not making it an option not to. This strategy, while it can be a faster process than other strategies, is usually met with more resistance. The second strategy is educative change strategy, which involves teaching those involved why the change is necessary and how it will improve the company. This can create higher commitment, but will take more time. The most desirable strategy to implement is the rational change strategy. The rational change strategy seeks to show that the change is not only necessary and benefits the company, but will benefit the employee personally (David, 2013, p. 234). Kotter's solution to resistance to change is simply more change. The short-term wins should be used to help produce the long-term, big-time changes. At this point in time it must be ensured that no

one has lost sight of the vision, another reason why it is so important to take time to establish the right vision. The vision, along with the urgency level, should be reiterated, as the group focus must be raised to further guide and implement that change. More than likely, if the manager is excited and following the vision, the employees will be too (Kotter, 1996, p. 143).

The final step of the 8-step process is to make the change sink in to the culture. The culture of an organization can be compared to DNA of a body. Although a person cannot necessarily see it, it defines how things happen within that company (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010, p. 416). With the culture having such weighty control over an organization, changing it can be a difficult task, although not impossible. For this to happen, the results of the change process must be favorable. Everyone involved must be certain the new way of doing things is superior to the old. Talking about the effectiveness of the change and reassuring that this new system and the change that occurred are valid is crucial. With much change in an organization comes a high possibility of turnover. It is also essential to the process for this change to not end with the present leadership. There must be a continued passion for growth and change. The people in charge dictate what direction the company goes, so the future leaders should be identified and developed to succeed and take the change to the next level (Kotter, 1996, p. 157).

A major side note to the 8 steps is the necessity of this process must be done with leadership and not just as managing. Managing is organizing, planning, and making sure things are running smoothly. Leadership takes those ideas further and has the capacity to motivate others to actually change their attitudes and ideas towards something. Leadership is defined as “influencing, motivating, and enabling others to contribute

toward the effectiveness and success of the organization of which they are members” (McShane, 2010, p. 360). Notice how this definition of leadership does not necessarily refer to a person in highest authority. People can be leaders in any “organization of which they are members.” Therefore, leadership can apply to the Chief Executive officer as well as the Janitor. Since it has already been made clear leadership is necessary to accomplish change in an organization, it is also vital to mention that, if the leader of this change only manages and does not lead, the change may never properly happen. A leader must do exactly that, *lead*; or else the process will just be a failed attempt at trying to move complacent individuals to a more effective, imaginative ideal (Kotter, 1996, pp. 25-31).

### **Using Servant Leadership to Produce Change**

So how can a servant leader accomplish the aforementioned steps and produce his desired change? When one utilizes the steps for leading change and understands what a servant leader embodies, the application can become quite interesting. Each of the eight steps can be accomplished using techniques widely associated with servant leadership.

The first step of establishing a sense of urgency as previously suggested by Kotter (1996), can be readily accomplished with the servant leadership style. The sense of urgency needs to be established to show others the change is not only beneficial, but is also needed. Many people will not want to make the effort to change (even when it can lead to greater success) unless they understand how important it is to make the change (Kotter, 1996, p. 41). Servant leaders can do a great job of making the importance of change especially visible. Servant leaders do not normally describe something needing to take place; they are often the ones out on the floor showing others what needs to be done. If a statement is made, a servant leader will back it up with action. While many leaders

may take an approach to creating urgency based mostly on media or speaking, servant leaders will show their followers the necessary urgency with the way they act and speak about the change. Servant leaders are known to improve conditions through encouragement and facilitation as opposed to authority and power (Waterman, 2011, p. 26). Servant Leaders push others past the struggle of complacency by serving them and showing them why the change is so important. The difference from other leadership perspectives is that it focuses on motivating the individuals by action. Educating employees on why the change needs to happen and how it is beneficial is one of the best ways to manage resistance to change (David, 2013, p. 234).

Creating the “guiding coalition,” as Kotter refers to it, is not necessarily a step that takes a servant leader to accomplish. One essential part of this process, however, is forming the team. Kotter makes a point bringing up the idea of a person not being able to make change happen by himself; he must have help of a coalition or group that believes in the change (1996, pp. 52-54). Many leaders do not possess the humility to accept the idea of not being able to make the change happen on their own. Being a servant and being humble, however, can add to the success of bringing about change. Leaders, classified as servant leaders, often possess a certain level of humility; this makes working with teams much easier. A leader who knows he cannot complete tasks on his own and seeks the help of a team will have great success at creating a guiding coalition. Leaders who are isolated may have success for a period of time if they possess enough talent and knowledge, but, in the end, they will not be able to keep up with the growing number of decisions to be made (p. 53). In order for a team to have success, it is suggested that team members follow the “five C’s,” which include cooperating coordinating, communicating,

comforting, and conflict resolving (McShane, 2010, p. 243-244). These five behaviors require humility and assisting and understanding others, all of which are common practices to servant leaders.

Vision and strategy is a large part of any style of leadership and servant leaders, like any other leaders, must take time to make sure they themselves know in which direction the organization should go and how to get there. If a person is going to motivate and enable his followers, it is crucial to know how and for what he is motivating and enabling them. With that in mind, establishing the vision becomes even more important in leading change. Vision must also meet needs of others, not just one person; true vision will go “beyond what one individual can accomplish” (Maxwell, 2002, p. 54). Overall, how servant leaders do this compared to other leaders may not be too different.

According to Kotter, The vision must be imaginable, desirable, feasible, focused, flexible, and communicable (1996, p.72). It may take much working and re-working to land on a final, well-formed vision. An advantage that servant leaders possess when it comes to this area is their knowledge and experience with followers. Servant leaders are often walking around getting to know employees or trying to understand them better and, therefore, may have a better grasp on where the company is and how to best motivate followers to get to the desired place. This attribute also helps when it comes to planning the strategy. Knowing followers and what motivates them, will help create an effective strategy for accomplishing the vision.

Communicating the change vision is equally as important as establishing what the vision is. If a vision cannot be clearly passed on from the leaders of the vision to the follower, it will not become a plan put forth into action at all. As mentioned above, there

are seven concepts central to communicating the vision. For reference, these are clarity, connection, purpose, goals, challenges, stories, and passion (Maxwell, 2005, p. 249).

While a servant leader can definitely apply his strengths and leadership styles to all seven of these components, it can be argued the servant leader has the biggest edge over other styles of leaders when it comes to stories and passion.

Using stories of past and present accomplishments to build community can be considered a strength of servant leaders (Jones-Burbridge, 2012, p. 46). Stories can refer to any moment in the company that is retold to prove a point or to teach a lesson. These stories could be of when and how the company was founded, an adversity that was overcome, or even a story of a normal worker doing his job well. With these stories, it is also important to know that personal experience translates much easier than mere stories of others. Watching for and telling stories in the workplace of current workers will make it easier for the employees to identify with it. Servant leaders can accomplish this by being around the people and serving them. Servant leaders often are found spending time alongside their followers and hear the stories of these followers overcoming obstacles and fighting to keep the vision rolling firsthand. The high level of connection with employees (and maybe even being a part of some of the stories) makes it easier for the servant leader to communicate them to his followers. It can also enhance the leader's credibility with his followers if he is involved the stories that bring the vision to life. Along with the use of stories, a servant leader will never force his ideas on the subordinates by using coercion. Rather, he will use persuasion to gain followers, never exerting his title of authority as the main component of acquiring trust or support (2012, p. 46).

Servant leaders should also excel at the passion aspect of communicating the vision to followers. Serving others as a leader presents an enormous advantage in the communication of vision. A leader who serves his followers is definitely one who is passionate about what he is doing and the potential future his organization may have. A servant leader has high self-awareness and knows what he is passionate about and how to incorporate his passion into the vision. Furthermore, by putting forth the extra effort and a longer work schedule to serve followers and the company, the servant leader demonstrates his stewardship of the authority he has been given as well as the task that is set before him (Jones-Burbridge, 2012, p. 46). The commitment demonstrated shows the passion a leader can have. As mentioned before passion is contagious, and if the followers of a servant leader see his passion manifested in ways such as giving the extra effort to his workload, it is likely the followers will end up giving a similar amount of extra effort.

Empowering the employees is another vital aspect of bringing about change that servant leaders can accomplish very well. One author showed importance of this practice by writing, "A real leader's aim is to make everyone around him better. He makes them stronger, more effective, and more motivated" (MacArthur, 2004, p. 37). Kotter suggests removing structural barriers, providing training, aligning systems, and confronting supervisors who are undermining authority (1996, p. 115). While these suggestions are strong ones, empowering employees is so much more than simply setting up the company in a more efficient manner. It does not take much leadership experience to understand that structures or supervisors who hinder must be removed or that employees require

adequate training. Rather than these ideas, Maxwell suggests developing the person as opposed to the system in which he works. He writes:

Getting the job done makes you a success. Getting the job done through others makes you a leader. But developing the people while helping them get the job done at the highest level makes you an exceptional leader. When you develop others, they become better, they do the job better, and both you and the organization benefit. (2005, p. 229)

By adhering to the above statement, the servant leader has the opportunity to do what he does best; serve people. Developing followers like this will not only make them better employees, but also better people. It could lead to them having a better work ethic on the job and at home. It could lead to them understanding and practicing service more frequently. With the demonstration of humility, followers may take on similar attitudes. The process may take some time, but in the end it will be worth the cost. The servant leader must go to work and not only understand his employees, their dreams, visions, and who they are, but also get them to understand themselves. There may be tough conversations that happen, but with serving a person, also comes having their best interests in mind, and if that means pointing out an area of needed improvement, then it must be done. Developing people involves teaching them and pushing them to learn, especially learning leadership. Giving followers opportunities to lead is a great way to empower them. Maxwell adds, “When you continually develop people, there is never a shortage of leaders to build the organization and help you carry the load” (2005, p. 236). Developing people instead of just analyzing the organization is a much better way to empower them because if a person has freedom to do what he needs to do in the

company, but does still not know himself well enough to accomplish the right goals in the right ways, it will be of no greater benefit.

Generating change must also include encouragement. Servant leaders have great potential to be phenomenal encouragers. Many people feel encouraged when they are being served, especially by someone they would least expect, such as their leader. A common way of encouraging throughout the change process is setting goals that can be achieved and then celebrating the completion of these goals. These short-term victories give confidence to the long-term process. It is much easier to believe in an ideal that is seen as far off when small results can be seen in each step along the way. It can be tough work for a person to shoulder if the goal he is striving for does not seem to be getting any closer. These short-term goals can be a wide variety of different things. Whatever the goal is, it deserves to be enjoyed when accomplished. One way to celebrate the short-term goals is to give praise where it is due. Praise can be given either publically or privately; both have their place (Maxwell, 2005, p. 255). A servant leader should embrace the idea of encouraging with vigor. Humility is key in being a servant leader and giving praise to others is a great chance to demonstrate that. Praise in the light of achieving a success towards the great idea that the organization is moving toward deserves to be pointed out and when it is it can stir up motivation like nothing else.

One of the last steps to creating change in an organization involves staying true to what needs to be accomplished in the long run. When the end is in the distant future, it may be tough to keep the resolve up and push forward toward the goal of the vision of change. There may be doubt in the value of the change or there may be resistance to making the change concrete within the organization. Kotter suggests more change, more

help, and more leadership (1996, p. 143). Kotter's idea, although it may seem like a tough avenue to pursue, is necessary because one set of changes may not be enough to reach the desired state. It may be found that the original idea of change is not enough to get the group where it needs to go. There may take several introductions of change to keep the company headed in the right direction. Jim Collins presents an idea that backs up the idea of more change. His book explains concepts and trends great companies applied to become better than the companies around them. One of these concepts is called "the flywheel." To sum up the idea, a company should be constantly making improvements to the point of results, like pushing a giant wheel, one small push at a time; after a period of time the wheel will be spinning at an incredible rate (2001, p. 174). Collins also pointed out that the companies that had great success never had that one "miracle moment," but instead were the effect of many "buildups and breakthroughs" (2001, p. 169). Here is another potential area where being a servant leader is beneficial. Making the necessary continuous change will take commitment and hard work. Servant leaders thrive in situations such as this. Being service minded and loyal to the goal helps make servant leaders make necessary secondary changes. Understanding the change needs to happen and is in the best interest of the company will cause servant leaders to do what needs to be done. The commitment of a servant leader will aid them in continually pushing the flywheel to keep the company rolling in the right direction.

The final step in leading change is making sure the change is firmly rooted in the culture of the company. The culture of a company is defined as "the values and assumptions shared within an organization. It defines what is important and unimportant in the company and, consequently, directs everyone in the organization toward the right

way of doing things” (McShane, 2010, p. 416). It can be either a powerful tool or a crippling devastator to a company. While making a culture embrace change is tough, it is not impossible. The key is making sure that it is understood that the new way of doing things is better than the old. Constantly communicating why the change is happening and its importance is vital to success. Servant leading is involved with modeling the desired behavior of the new culture. Servant leaders can be great examples. If they lead, and lead well, while modeling what they wish to come from their employees, it is only a matter of time before the trend catches on and the culture changes. It is also important to reiterate that this is the last step and not the first. One cannot simply change the norms of an organization in the beginning and expect it to bring about success (Kotter, 1996, p. 157).

### **Conclusion**

Leading change is one of the most difficult things someone can do. Denying oneself is also especially high (if not higher) on that list. Combining those two thoughts, and leading change while being a servant to all is incalculably demanding; but it is effective and rewarding for those can do it. While the task is daunting, it is one worth pursuing. It may take time, effort, and perseverance, but in the end, there will be no regrets. Theodore Roosevelt summed up this idea well:

The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring

greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew  
neither victory nor defeat. (Manning, 2012, p. 10)

Lead. Serve. Maybe these two ideas are not as far apart as many people seem to think.

## References

- Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great, why some companies make the leap – and others don't*. (1st ed.). Harper Collins.
- David, F. R. (2013). *Strategic management: concept and cases*. (14th ed.). Boston, MA: Prentice Hall.
- Gentry, W., & Sparks, T. (2012). A Convergence/Divergence Perspective of Leadership Competencies Managers Believe are Most Important for Success in Organizations: A Cross-Cultural Multilevel Analysis of 40 Countries. *Journal Of Business & Psychology*, 27(1), 15-30.  
<http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=71672027&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Jones-Burbridge, J. (2012). SERVANT Leadership. *Corrections Today*, 73(6), 45-47.  
<http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=70273627&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading change*. Harvard Business Press.
- Leman, D. K., & Pentak, W. (2004). *The way of the shepherd*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- MacArthur, J. (2010). *Called to lead, 26 leadership lessons from the life of the apostle Paul*. Thomas Nelson Inc.
- Manning, G., & Curtis, K. (2012). *The art of leadership*. (4th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- Maxwell, J. C. (2002). *Leadership one hundred one*. Thomas Nelson Inc.

- Maxwell, J. C. (2005). *The 360-degree leader, developing your influence from anywhere in the organization*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc.
- Mcshane, S., & Glinow, M. V. (2011). *Organizational behavior*. (5th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- Stanley, A. (2003). *Next generation leader, 5 essentials for those who will shape the future*. Multnomah Books.
- Tidball, D. (2012). Leaders as Servants: a Resolution of the Tension. *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 36(1), 31-47.  
<http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=70377886&site=ehost-live&scope=sit>
- Waterman, H. (2011). Principles of “servant leadership” and how they can enhance practice. *Nursing Management – UK*, 17(9), 24-26.  
<http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=58043443&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Worth, M. J. (2012). *Nonprofit management, principles and practice*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc.