

ARE YOU A SERVANT-LEADER?
DEVELOPING THE 10 CHARACTERISTICS
(Adapted R. Greenleaf, “*Servant Leadership*”)

A. Calling

Do People believe that you are willing to sacrifice self-interest for the good of the group?

Servant-leaders have a natural desire to serve others. This notion of a having a calling to serve is deeply rooted and value-based. Servant-leaders have a desire to make a difference for other people and will pursue opportunities to impact others lives. A servant leader is willing to sacrifice self-interests for the sake of others. To have a calling cannot be taught, unless a person has natural calling to serve, servant leadership will be elusive.

1. Listening

Do people believe that you want to hear their ideas and will value them?

Servant-leaders demonstrate their characteristics by making a deep commitment to listening intently to others. Servant-leaders seek to identify and clarify the will of a group. They seek to listen receptively to what is being said (and not said). People instinctively understand that servant-leaders want them to share their ideas and that these ideas will be valued.

2. Empathy

Do people believe that you will understand what is happening in their lives and how it affects them?

Servant-leaders strive to “walk in others’ shoes”. All people need to be accepted and recognized for their special and unique personhood. A servant leader will understand and empathize with others’ circumstances and problems. They will earn the confidence needed to lead by listening and not passing judgment, but being fully present in the situation being experienced.

3. Healing

Do others come to you when their tanks are low and options are few, especially when something traumatic has happened in their lives?

One of the great strengths of servant-leaders is the potential for healing one's self and others. In "The Servant as Leader", Greenleaf writes, "There is something subtle communicated to one who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between the servant-leader and led is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something that they have." The ability to create an environment that encourages emotional mending is crucial for those who want to become great servant-leaders.

4. Awareness

Do others believe you have a strong sense clarity and insight for what is going on?

General awareness, and especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant-leader, giving them a keen sense of what is happening around them. They are always looking for cues from the environment to inform their options and decisions, maintaining their own inner-security. They are not absorbed into others problems nor are they surprised by them, yet servant-leaders are informed and aware of the situations that surround them.

5. Persuasion

Do others follow your requests because they “want to” or because they “have to?”

Servant-leaders rely on persuasion, rather than formal positional authority in making decisions. Servant-leaders are naturally convincing and offer compelling reasons when they make requests rather than coerce for compliance. This characteristic offers one of the clearest distinctions between traditional leadership and servant leadership. The servant-leader is effective at building consensus within groups.

6. Conceptualization

Do others contribute their ideas and vision for the good of the group when you are around?

Servant-leaders seek to nurture their abilities to "dream great dreams." This also encourages others to dream great dreams and avoid getting bogged down by the day-to-day realities and operations. Servant-leaders balance creative thinking and bringing the world, events and possibilities together. No situation remains in isolation or in a problematic state through the efforts of conceptualization.

7. Foresight

Do others have confidence in your ability to anticipate the results of decisions and their consequences?

Foresight is a characteristic that enables servant-leaders to understand lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision in the future. It is deeply rooted in the intuitive mind. Servant-leaders are adept at picking up the patterns in the environments and seeing what the future will bring.

8. Stewardship

Do others believe you are preparing them to make a positive difference in the world?

Stewardship is the ability to reach the potential of those around you for the greatest impact possible. Robert Greenleaf's view of all institutions was one in which CEO's, staff, directors, and trustees all play significance roles in holding their institutions in trust for the great good of society. Knowing that everyone contributes to the greater good, a servant-leader sees each person and stewards those resources for maximum impact.

9. Growth in People

Do people believe that you are committed to helping them develop as whole persons?

Servant-leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. As such, Servant-leaders are deeply committed to a personal, professional, and spiritual growth of each and every individual within the organization.

10. Building Community

Do people feel a strong sense of community in the places where you lead?

Servant-leaders believe that organizations need to function as community. They are aware that the shift from local communities to large institutions as the primary shaper of human lives has changed our perceptions and caused a sense of loss. Servant-leaders bring and instill a sense of community through their attitude, thoughts and behaviors.