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Exposing Effective Leadership

Tom Rath plainly states in his book, *Strengths Based Leadership*, “The most effective leaders are always investing in strengths” (2). Throughout the last couple of weeks, I have been focusing my research and attention specifically on leadership. I have discovered what kind of leader I am, what a good leader is to me, and how I can build on to my leadership skills throughout my college career.

Before participating in this unit of leadership, I had no idea there were so many different ways to be a leader. The StrengthsFinder Assessment that was a feature of Rath’s book provided me with significant insight on what my valued leadership skills are. The results of the assessment boosted my confidence: restorative, developer, empathy, positivity, and discipline. In addition to the StrengthsFinder Assessment, I took a quiz from Susan Cain’s book titled *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking* to determine if I am an introvert, extrovert, or ambivert. Before taking the quiz, I figured my results would be that I am an introvert. I was correct, and I thought that meant I would not be as efficient as an extrovert leader. However, Cain says differently when she says, “We don’t need giant personalities to transform companies. We need leaders who build not their own egos but the institution they run” (55). She explains that both extroverts AND introverts are successful leaders. Extrovert leaders do better with passive workers, and introvert leaders do better with proactive workers. As an introvert, I am more open and receptive to trying other peoples’ ideas that might be more efficient than my original plan. It was very uplifting to discover from Rath and Cain that I have leadership attributes that would be valuable to a team.

Focusing on leadership in this unit has led me to think about what characteristics I think a good leader has. An effective leader should heavily emphasize relationship building. This means they should have the following characteristics: adaptability, empathy, individualization, connectedness, harmony, positivity, developer, includer, and relator (Rath 47). These characteristics are important to me because a group of people that are working together towards a common purpose can be immensely more effective than one individual trying to accomplish something. An example of a leader that focuses on relationship building is Mervyn Davies who is the chairman at Standard Chartered Bank. He placed “trust in others to deal with areas in which they had competence,” and this allowed Davies to spend his time developing future leaders and helping others grow their talents (Rath 54). This sticks out to me because it shows that Davies is focusing on what is best for his company as a whole, not just himself. He is helping others build their self-confidence so they can eventually become effective leaders themselves. “When leaders can do this, it allows the entire team to spend even more time thinking about the needs of the people they serve” (Rath 76). I like to picture myself as a leader with the same personality as Davies, and I plan to work towards becoming a leader that has similar attributes as him.

Being in the honors program at Minnesota State University, Mankato has led me to become involved in educational activities. The most prominent example of this is my study group for a course I am enrolled in titled “Sensitivity to Disability.” We are planning on doing a group project together which will require us to utilize all of our individual strengths. We have not started our project yet, but we do study for exams together. During one of our class periods, we were required to come up with five main values in life. This was much more difficult than it sounds because we all have very diverse views on things such as faith, family, and education. We had to work together to come up with things that didn’t raise controversy or arguments. Each one of us was able to generate ideas, and then had to decide as a unit which ones would be our top five. Additionally, I am volunteering to usher at the theatre productions on campus with a group of other college students. We will have to work as a team to help preparing for the show go smoothly. These are great experiences to develop my leadership competency, but I would like to become involved in more educational activities throughout my college career. For example, I would like to work with a foreign student who struggles with the English language. I would also like to participate in campus organizations that interest me such as a design club. Eventually, I plan to pursue a leadership role whether that be in a club, residence hall, or the student body. Becoming involved on campus has opened my eyes to many different ways that I will be able to develop my leadership competency.

In conclusion, I have been exposed to several different aspects of leadership throughout the last couple of weeks. Before this unit, I had no idea that there were so many different ways to be/become an effective leader. Specifically, I learned that I am an introverted leader that focuses on other peoples’ ideas, I value a leader that emphasizes relationships, and I was able to think of ideas to help me develop my leadership skills throughout my college career at Minnesota State University, Mankato. This leadership unit encourages me to focus on my strengths and work on becoming a more effective leader.

Works Cited

Cain, Susan. *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking.*

Rath, Tom*. Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams, and Why People Follow.* Gallup Press, 2008.