

# Unit I:

## Personal Leadership Skills

### 1. The Leader within You

In exploring leadership qualities within ourselves, we think about personal abilities—mental and physical. We think about knowledge, skills, time, energy, and even attitude and enthusiasm. We think of building leadership capacity. This involves enhancing our abilities, learning to transfer skills from one situation to another, and devoting time to reflection and developing a personal leadership philosophy. There are varied definitions of leadership. Examples include:

1. The process of using influence to help a group achieve its goals.
2. The beliefs individuals have about what makes effective leaders.
3. The qualities, behaviors, skills, and knowledge of people regarded as effective leaders.
4. An influence-based relationship to help a group achieve mutual goals.

Which of these most closely reflect your own attitudes toward leadership? It is important to understand your own leadership style, your priorities, your beliefs, and your habits since how you personally view leadership and your leadership role clearly affects how you respond to the challenge of leadership.

## The Challenge of Leadership

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As we are all aware, we are living in a time of rapid change. Changes have always taken place in our society, but today's differing element seems to be the rate of change. Change happens so fast that we sometimes feel we can hardly keep up. This rapid change also leads to feelings of uncertainty. Traditions and customary ways of doing things are threatened, creating fear of the unknown that sometimes leads to a resistance to change—we don't quite know how to proceed.

Apathy or doing nothing is one way this resistance to change is illustrated. Individuals and families are so busy trying to manage their personal activities that they don't make time for the broader community, not realizing group or community action is often the best way to address these new issues.

As you begin to explore "the leader within you," think about ways that may be appropriate for you to revise elements of your style, your priorities, your beliefs, and your habits. In particular, ask yourself:

- Am I paying enough attention to the subjective aspects of leadership including the values, culture, and tone in the organization(s) in which I am involved?
- Am I doing all I can to bring out the best in others? Am I valuing and respecting their differences and motivating and inspiring them?
- Am I "walking my talk" and modeling the values I believe in?
- What other leadership actions should I be adding? How am I balancing my focus on results versus people? My commitment to career versus my personal life (Ayres 1996)?

Today's challenge is to ask:

- Do I share in leadership roles?
- Am I developing my ability to work with others as a team leader and member?
- Am I a lifelong learner, instead of thinking I already know all there is to know?

## Citizen Leadership

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Citizen leaders are people in the community who are concerned about the quality of life in their community. They assume responsibility for the public good and see a need to act together for the common good of the community. Citizen leaders take ownership of the problems and opportunities that exist in the community and hold themselves accountable for seeing that action is taken. In other words, they don't want "experts" or politicians to solve the problems for them (Ayres 1996; Heifetz 1994).

Citizen leaders work with others in the community to identify opportunities or problems. They help others articulate a common purpose and set goals and objectives. They also assume that there are differences in the way people regard the opportunity or problem, i.e., different values, different experiences, different viewpoints (Ayers 1996; Beckhard and Goldsmith 1996). Citizen leaders help people connect their differences to the common purpose that brought them together. In other words, the citizen leader helps people see how their differences can be used to solve problems rather than be a point of conflict. Citizen leaders also acknowledge that problem solving requires a commitment of time. They realize that people must gain as well as contribute to the problem-solving process. Leaders also help people find their roles in the process and affirm the developmental nature of the relationship.

## Trends in Leadership

Ask yourself, “How do I think about leadership and myself as a leader?” Each one of us has a wide range of skills, interests, and abilities that we use in our daily lives—at home with our families, on the job, and in our communities. Some tasks are more meaningful and enjoyable to us than others.

### New Trends in Leadership

Old Style of Leadership	New Trends in Leadership
Leader makes decision	Leader creates environments where decisions can be made
Hierarchy	Teamwork
Directive and controlling	Enabling and learning
Conflict	Cooperation
Reactive and responsive	Proactive and creative
Exclusive	Inclusive
Single function	Multifunction

When you are thinking about moving into a leadership position or a more active role as a group member, think about these questions:

1. What skills do I have to offer?
2. What would I like to learn more about?
3. What is it that I don't like to do?
4. What do I want to do but am hesitant about?

Think about what motivates you, gets you excited, and makes you feel successful in your leadership roles.

## Motivation

Motivating yourself and others is a fundamental yet complex leadership ability. As leaders, we make important contributions when we find incentives for ourselves and when we create an environment that makes it possible for other people to motivate themselves. As you consider your leadership philosophy and style, ask yourself, “What can I contribute to my organization and community—either on or off the job?” We need to figure out how to release the leader within and get ourselves up and moving. Internal motivation comes from within a person, so understanding and supporting the motivation of the individual group member is vital. Your own enthusiasm and commitment are also crucial to success.

Group leaders and managers can provide incentives and set the stage for people to become motivated. Sources of motivation are often divided into five categories:

- **Achievement:** Some people strive for success in accomplishments and a high level of involvement. They are “doers” who like getting projects done.
- **Power:** Some people aim to have impact or influence in dealing with other people and/or project results. They do well as fund-raisers or when working with politicians.
- **Affiliation:** Some people like being with others, enjoy mutual friendship, and want to belong to a group. They don't enjoy tasks in which they work alone and like to plan celebrations and social events.
- **Recognition:** Some people desire recognition for work performed and are concerned about status and visibility in the group or community. They enjoy working with the media and making public appearances and appreciate

receiving certificates and having their name in the paper.

- Altruism: Some people prefer doing things for the general good or public interest. They enjoy working with other groups who have shared values and goals and feel a need to pay something back to society.

Many people are motivated by several of these categories. At different stages in your life, one area may be more important than others.

## Empowerment

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In much of the work that we do, whether for pay or as a volunteer, a group of people with different types of interests and expertise is involved. Part of leadership is recognizing differences and empowering others. Empowerment is not just one of today's buzzwords—in the leadership context, it summarizes some important trends and principles for leadership in today's society. For example, it means:

- Moving away from the idea of one leader who has all the answers and who can tell everybody what to do.
- Acknowledging the capability and desirability of different people to influence decisions.
- Accepting the need for and benefits of personal, organizational, and community change.
- Accessing information and other resources.
- Transferring power or enlarging the power base and understanding of all stakeholders; giving and accepting power and responsibility.
- Thinking of power as energy or the influence or ability to get things done. Power is not seen as something negative or coercive.
- Sharing knowledge and interests, as well as a vision and goals.

If individuals in leadership roles can foster an environment where everyone contributes their expertise and leadership skills, then motivation, energy, and enthusiasm will follow. This involves a shift from doing and controlling to an attitude or philosophy of empowering and enabling, along with the confidence to share credit as well as work.

## Applying Your Leadership Skills

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What we are really talking about now is the concept of citizen leadership. Much of good leadership is just being a good citizen, leading by example, and genuinely caring for other people and their concerns. Think about following these seven steps to becoming a better citizen, thus adding value to your leadership potential:

1. Be a team player—Actively work with others to “get things done.”
2. Be courteous—Consult others before decisions are made.
3. Act constructively—Have a positive attitude and be open to new ideas.
4. Be a good sport—Don't take yourself too seriously and don't get overly concerned if things don't go the way you think they should.
5. Be conscientious—Be punctual and responsible. Don't procrastinate.
6. Celebrate the success of others—Compliment others on their accomplishments. As a result, they will likely do the same for you. Share the credit for accomplishments.
7. Believe in fairness—Treat others in an honest, straightforward manner, and avoid double standards (Organ 1977).

Viewing the leadership behavior of all members of a group rather than the authoritative position of one means seeing leadership as a more complex and subtle phenomenon than it is often taken to be. Leadership demands within a group, even within the same meeting, may be quite dynamic. A group that utilizes the broad range of leadership skills within its membership is a productive, practical organization.

When we define leadership as the process of working with a group to achieve mutual goals, we see that leadership is not possessed by any one individual as exclusive property. Leadership is the group's property (Rost 1993). Group members seek a sense of belonging and participation in making the rules they will be governed by. They want reachable goals and meaningful, challenging responsibilities. They want to be kept informed, to see progress, and to feel confident in their leadership. Any individual may assume, acquire, or be elected to the leadership position. However, as the situation or group goals change, the requirements of the leadership role may also change. When this happens, another member of the group may better possess the skills and abilities needed to achieve the goals and should become the next leader.

## Management Versus Leadership

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Leaders spend time in reflective, dynamic, value-based planning and organizing.

They provide vision and are a source of inspiration as well as structure and direction to others. Leadership functions relate to the broad view of helping an organization clarify and affirm values, set goals, articulate a vision, and chart a course of action to achieve that vision. Good leaders create a healthy tension between current reality and an imagined ideal.

Managers focus on the specific details of daily practice. These people manage human and financial resources. Managerial functions relate to the actual orchestration of tasks and organization of systems to accomplish the vision. The work of management can be considered a central leadership task.

The distinction between management and leadership is defined as the difference between effectiveness and efficiency—leaders do the right things; managers do things right. Both are essential (Kouzes and Pozner 1995).

## Summary

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A broad base of leadership is vital to organizations and communities, which exists for nearly every purpose imaginable. Regardless of size, the organizations and communities work to sustain themselves and their members. Each group must have skilled leadership to maximize its efforts toward achieving its goals. Countless opportunities for leadership are present. There is great need for shared or participative leadership, which also results in more effective followers—individuals who are committed to the active and substantive involvement essential to attaining group goals. There is a leader within everyone.

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One of the most critical needs in Pennsylvania is strong local leadership for the future well-being of communities. This includes leadership for civic and nonprofit organizations, youth, the business community, elected officials, and citizens.

The *Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow* leadership curriculum was developed to help individuals develop and strengthen their personal leadership skills so they can play active and constructive leadership roles in their communities. The program focuses on developing and strengthening personal and interpersonal leadership skills, group and organizational leadership skills, and community leadership skills.

The curriculum is designed for use as a comprehensive, multiple-session leadership training program, taught by trained Penn State Cooperative Extension educators. Individual modules can also be used for stand-alone training within existing groups or organizations who want training on specific leadership or group process issues.

The entire *Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow* curriculum includes:

#### Unit I: Personal Leadership Skills

- 1: The Leader within You
- 2: Values and Ethics
- 3: Understanding Your Leadership Style

#### Unit II: Interpersonal Leadership Skills

- 1: Communications Basics
- 2: Facilitation
- 3: Managing Conflict

#### Unit III: Group/Organizational Leadership Skills

- 1: Productive Groups
- 2: Effective Meetings
- 3: Group Decisions

#### Unit IV: Community/Public Policy Leadership Skills

- 1: Dealing with Change
- 2: Public Issues
- 3: Understanding Pennsylvania Local Government
- 4: Active Leadership

For more information about the *Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow* program, contact your local Penn State Cooperative Extension office, or visit [www.leadership.psu.edu](http://www.leadership.psu.edu).

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