



SERVANT LEADERSHIP: THE DECIDING DIFFERENCE

Lesson 4 - Advantages of Servant Leadership

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Transcript

[TEXT: Young African Leaders Initiative Online Training Series]

[TEXT: Mandela Washington Fellowship Institute Course]

[TEXT: Servant Leadership: The Deciding Difference]

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Welcome back to Servant Leadership, the Deciding Difference.

At the end of Lesson 3, I asked you to rank your leaders according to the principles of servant leadership. Who embodied the principles of servant leadership best? Who has more work to do to be a servant-leader? And where did you rank in your list?

Let's now review the advantages of servant leadership.

Because servant-leaders appreciate their team members as special and unique individuals, they are more likely to embrace and foster diversity within their work environments. Viewing the workplace as a community, servant-leaders recognize that a team is made stronger through a diverse array of backgrounds and life experiences. It acknowledges that our differences are what makes us stronger.

Servant leadership is built on a philosophy of coexistence. Through this lens, leadership is not a position. Rather, organizations must become centers of learning and collaboration, and we must see the importance of trust and work to build it.

Bret Simmons identified that servant leadership produced an affect-based trust in followers, and that type of trust in the leader allowed teams to reach the highest levels of productivity. Team members thrive when they believe they can participate openly and actively without fear of suffering adverse personal consequences, such as being belittled for their ideas. Trust must be earned, and Simmons suggests that if a leader is unhappy with how her team is performing, the leader must take a good look in the mirror and ensure your leadership is worthy of their trust.



Servant leadership is a relatively new concept in the study and practice of leadership, and with it have come some criticisms. Some blister at the term “servant-leaders,” as the word “servant” may prompt a negative connotation due to its association with oppressive social hierarchies – especially those associated with women, people of color. The word “leader” may also carry with it some level of unfavorable historical baggage. However, it is the juxtaposition of this pairing, the startling paradox of the term “servant leadership,” which serves to prompt new insights.

Servant leadership has also come under fire for remaining grounded in a philosophical theory and for lacking empirical evidence. While more research needs to be done, there is significant evidence of the positive impact that servant leadership can have. Namely, it reduces leadership stress, strengthens the backbone of the organizations, and pushes individuals forward. The Indianapolis Business Journal called servant leadership a dominant philosophical orientation of our time. The New York Times focused on servant leadership’s emphasis on the everyday power that exists in organizations. Similarly, Fortune Magazine lauded servant leadership for recognizing the importance of consensus in achieving organizational goals. Working Woman Magazine noted the contributions of servant leadership in getting to the core of what matters in organizations. Servant leadership benefits businesses, non-profit organizations and public sector entities.

In Lesson 5, we will learn how to put this type of leadership into action.

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