

Leadership in Leisure Services: Making a Difference

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For Zu—Thank you for making a difference.



All of us have been influenced by great leaders in some way or another. It might have been through our admiration of their work—their ability to get the job done, the smoothness with which they handled diverse situations, or the way they seemed to do good things for people in spite of inevitable difficulties. In addition, we have been influenced by people important to us who exhibited a variety of leadership and followership skills. We have also learned from our own struggles with leadership and followership throughout our lives, although we might not have recognized it at the time.

This text is an outgrowth of my own journey through leadership, and it is but a step in the process. I have learned that leadership is something one does not *do*, but *is*. Being something requires time, focused energy, and a commitment to continuous learning. It requires a willingness to take risks, to stand up for what one believes, and the strength and courage to pick oneself up after unsuccessful attempts. In learning to become a leader, then, one must first come to accept that notion that not all leadership experiences will be successful. In fact, we can often learn more from unsuccessful efforts than those that required no real challenge or reflection.

Leadership is a difficult concept to thoroughly understand. However, we do use the term in everyday language, "Danielle is going to be an excellent leader!" or, "Boy, his leadership was not very effective, was it?" There is some shared meaning in these exchanges, although just what exactly was meant is not easily known. Although leadership as a construct might be difficult to grasp, many believe that leadership is the crux of the recreation, parks, leisure services, and tourism field. Because we are a people-oriented discipline, leadership is a common element of all aspects of the profession, no matter the setting, through which one provides leisure services to participants. This text is an attempt to capture some of the elements of leadership which are specific to the breadth of the field of leisure services, and to provide a starting (or continuation) point from which developing leaders may learn.

To aid in putting the pieces together, this text is divided into three sections: a foundation, the skills needed in working with people, and capstone material. In Section I, The Foundation: Developing the Underlying Construct, information is provided to help place later information into perspective. This section offers insight into expectations of a leader and is intended to assist readers in seeing themselves in relation to leadership. The very nature of our profession dictates that we learn about people—information in this first section will provide a basis upon which to develop specific skills. Through learning about how people perceive leadership, ways of looking at and conceptualizing leadership, and through learning about human development as it relates to leisure services, leaders will be best prepared for a variety of situations.

Section II, Working with People: Essential Skills of Leadership, begins to delve into the specific skill areas required of successful and effective leisure services leaders. Technical skills, conceptual skills, and human relations skills constitute necessary competencies of leisure services leadership. The material in this section is comprised of information and knowledge needed and utilized by leaders and followers alike, and in a variety of settings. To be either an effective follower or an effective leader, skills in working with others are absolutely critical. Group dynamics, communication skills, approaches and techniques for managing difficulties, and managing and motivating participant behaviors are all necessary to effective leadership in leisure services.

The purpose of Section III, Synergy: Pulling it All Together, is to pull the foundational material and the information about specific skills and techniques together in a cohesive blend of leadership knowledge. Issues such as diversity, leader values and ethics, and risk management are presented for consideration and implementation with direct leadership techniques. In addition to knowing and practicing basic skills, leisure services leaders need to stay abreast of social and professional issues as they arise. This requires ongoing education and a commitment to lifelong learning.

One intent of this text is for readers to learn the material and then practice it—with friends, family, and in work and school situations. Reading about leadership will aid in cognitive knowledge about leadership; however, becoming a better leader can only be achieved with practice. Therefore, readers are encouraged to use this book as a guide

in their own leadership development—to reflect, practice, receive feedback, and practice some more.

In addition to acknowledging those participants and students who have helped me to learn and hone my own leadership skills, appreciation and acknowledgment are also expressed to those who have impacted my professional life and encouraged my study of leadership. considered these individuals to be personal mentors and leaders in their fields of study and owe them each a great deal of gratitude. Heartfelt thank-yous go out to Chris Cashel, Roger Guthrie, Karla Henderson, Michal Anne Lord, Frank Lupton, John and Nancy Peterson, Paul Petzoldt, Ruth Russell, Sherril York, my colleagues at UNI, and my family for their support, challenges, and an overall willingness to provide me what I needed throughout my own development. In addition, a special note of appreciation is extended to the people who helped in the review of this manuscript: Jeff Ashby, Victoria DeFrancisco, Don DeGraaf, and Kathy DeGraaf. Chris Cashel served as the primary reviewer and her comments and insights were greatly appreciated.

Just as these individual leaders have made a difference in my life I suspect that in some form, leadership has also made a difference in your life. My hope is that as a developing leader in the field of leisure services, you will make a difference in the lives of others, as well.

—DJJ, 1996

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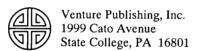
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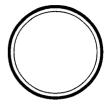
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Section I

The Foundation:

Developing the Underlying Construct

Leadership is a complex process which is not yet fully understood, yet through study (and practice) information can be learned to aid in the understanding of what leadership is and how to use it effectively. To help in the study of the various elements of leadership this text is divided into three sections, all of which are inextricably intertwined. Successful leadership requires more than technical skills (which could make one an excellent technician). It also requires an understanding of why one is doing what, and an understanding of how the practice of leadership influences the people with whom we work.

In this section of the text, the foundation is laid—information is provided to help place later materials into perspective and to provide a context for learning more specific skills. Basic definitional information, theories and models of leadership, and material about human development are presented as the frame around which other leadership skills are built.

By examining and understanding the evolution of how leadership has been defined and illustrated one can better view leadership as a process. This is important because without this material it can be difficult to understand the *why* of leadership. Therefore (while perhaps a bit drier than other material), material about definitions; leader competencies, traits, and qualities; and how leaders are identified is provided early on.

In addition, as a basis for developing one's own leadership style preferences, it is important to have a sense of what leadership looks like. Thus, several alternative ways of looking at leadership are presented in this section as theories and models of leadership. It is hoped that out of

these alternative views, one or more will feel like they fit. It often is easier to integrate book and practical knowledge into one's own experience base if a model or representation of a phenomenon feels like it makes sense.

Once exposed to background information about leadership, it is just as important to have a solid knowledge base about people—people, after all, are what defines a leader. The people whom we call clients, guests, customers, participants, users, players and by other titles are the individuals who make leisure services exciting, challenging, and highly rewarding. Thus, information about physical, socioemotional, intellectual, and moral development across the life span and how cultural differences affect that development is presented.

This first section of this text provides a basis for understanding—a foundation for—leadership. It may be a section that is read and discussed early in one's leadership education as well as a place to return after learning and practicing specific leadership skills. In this manner, a model (or philosophy) of leadership that provides guidance in a wide variety of leadership opportunities can be further developed.