# Servant Leadership

## Idea In Short

Servant Leadership Definition Servant leadership is a leadership style in which the leader puts the needs of others or team first. Servant leaders believe that when their team members feel personally and professionally fulfilled, they produce higher quality work more efficiently and productively.

Servant leadership is a leadership style in which the leader puts the needs of others firsts (or team first). Servant leaders believe that when their team members feel personally and professionally fulfilled, they produce higher quality work more efficiently and productively. Employee satisfaction and collaboration are important concepts in servant leadership. You can use this leadership style in any type of business, but it is particularly popular within nonprofit organizations

Servant leadership is the opposite of what we traditionally think of as leadership. All too often, we confuse leadership with dictatorship or autocratic leadership, but with servant leadership, instead of the team serving the leader, the top-down hierarchy is turned on its head. With servant leadership, the leader serves the team.

This approach can lead to higher commitment and performance levels, from the team members to their work, the team, and their manager.

The critical point about servant leadership is that a servant leader will be a servant first. They'll put the needs of others before themselves, especially the needs of their team.

## Characteristics

1. A strong desire to serve. Servant leadership is rooted in this desire to serve the servant leader
2. Focuses on what they can do for their people

3. They are supporting people to meet their goals both inside and outside of the office. They make their team feel like a community
4. It involves others in decision making when it's appropriate
5. Acting with integrity is another vital principle of servant leadership.

These qualities lead to a stronger team with higher trust levels, higher commitment, and stronger relationships, leading to higher performance from the whole team.

## Example

An example of servant leadership in action would be a manager at a company who prioritizes the development and well-being of their team members. This manager might spend extra time coaching and mentoring team members, actively listen to and incorporate their ideas and feedback, and make sure that team members have the resources and support they need to be successful. They would be more concerned about their team's growth and development than their own personal gain or career advancement. They would also act as a facilitator, removing obstacles and creating opportunities for their team members.

Another example would be a non-profit leader, who instead of prioritizing their own status or prestige, would focus on providing resources and support to the community they serve and empower them to take ownership of the organization.

Here are a few examples of well-known servant leaders:

- **Martin Luther King Jr.** - Civil rights leader who advocated for non-violent resistance and put the needs of the African American community before his own
- **Mahatma Gandhi** - Indian independence leader who advocated for non-violent civil disobedience and put the needs of the Indian people before his own
- **Nelson Mandela** - South African anti-apartheid revolutionary who served as president of South Africa from 1994 to 1999 and put the needs of the country and its people before his own
- **Mother Teresa** - Catholic nun who devoted her life to serving the poor and sick in Calcutta, India and put the needs of others before her own
- **Bill Gates** - Co-founder of Microsoft, philanthropist, and businessman who has used his wealth and resources to serve the needs of others through his foundation, the

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

- **Jesus Christ** - In the Bible, Christ always emphasized the need for servant-hood. Washing his disciple's feet was a classic way to show them the servant leadership way

These are just a few examples, there are many more servant leaders that have made significant impact in their communities and society.

## Becoming A Servant Leader

To become a Servant Leader, you need to cultivate these core skills.

### Listening

Servant Leadership is about more than just making decisions. Servant-leaders seek to identify and clarify the will of a group.

Servant leaders must be excellent listeners, and listening, obviously, is about hearing what individual members of your team are really saying. Then you can use this information to better steer the team towards its objectives.

Listening entails more than just what is spoken. You should be able to read between the lines and infer what is not said. You should be able to pick up on body language cues. It also encompasses getting in touch with one's inner voice, and seeking to understand what one's body, spirit, and mind are communicating.

### Empathy

Empathy and listening are closely intertwined, as it requires setting aside one's own perspective to truly understand and relate to others. Without this open-mindedness, it can be difficult to empathize with team members.

People need to be accepted and recognized for their special and unique spirit. You must assume the good intentions of your coworkers and not reject them as people, even when forced to reject their behavior or performance.

### Healing

Learning to heal is a powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of servant-leadership is the potential for healing one's self and others. In The Servant as Leader1, 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.

As a manager, promoting health encompasses both physical and mental well-being of each team member. This includes ensuring that they have the necessary resources and support to excel in their roles, such as guidance and mentorship. Additionally, it may involve providing access to counseling services or prioritizing health and safety in the workplace.

## Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to understand the impact of your emotions and actions on those around you. It may not always be comfortable, but it is crucial for improving your leadership skills. Through constant introspection and adjusting your approach, you can quickly address any issues and become a more effective leader over time.

## Persuasion

A key aspect of servant leadership is the use of persuasion rather than relying on formal authority when making decisions. Servant leaders aim to persuade others, rather than forcing compliance. This approach stands in contrast to the traditional authoritarian model of leadership, and it allows servant leaders to build consensus within groups.

## Conceptualization

Servant-leaders seek to nurture their abilities to dream great dreams. It requires moving beyond the immediate management of the team and taking a broader perspective. This includes being able to anticipate and plan for the future by aligning with the organization's long-term vision, which is often informed by the company's overall strategy.

## Foresight

Foresight involves looking beyond the present and anticipating potential problems that may arise in the future. It includes practices such as scenario planning, risk management, and considering user experience in order to proactively address potential issues. It's about combining current realities with a forward-thinking approach to plan for the future as effectively as possible.

## Stewardship

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.

It means accepting that you are responsible for your team's performance, and it means it means being the accountable person when your team doesn't perform now.

One common way to motivate your team to perform as a servant leader is to lead by example.

That includes modeling the behaviors on the values that you expect your team members to show and exhibit.

## Commitment to Team Growth

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.

A servant leader aims to guide and nurture employees beyond their abilities to do their job well.

The servant-leader should help each team member as best they can and help them reach their true potential.

## Building Community

And finally, we get to building community, and servant leaders make a great team spirit, a sense of community on a sense off, everybody being in it together.

Servant-leaders are aware that the shift from local communities to large institutions as the primary shaper of human lives has changed our perceptions and has caused a feeling of loss. Servant-leaders seek to identify a means for building community among those who work within a given institution.

## Comparison With Other Leadership Styles

First, it's essential to realize that servant leadership is more of a way of being than a challenging style of direction now.

It has nothing in common with autocratic leadership, where you're merely barking orders at your team, but it does work well with democratic and transformational leadership styles. These are styles of leadership that have high people emphasis.

You don't need to hold formal power or be the boss to be a servant leader; you could behave as a servant leader while being part of the team.

By doing this, you will build what's known as you're referring to power.

Leadership begins with a strong desire to help others to serve. It isn't a leadership style, per se. Still, it can work well with people-focused leadership styles, such as democratic leadership and transformational leadership, where the emphasis is on relationships rather than task management.

## Summary

Servant leadership is a leadership philosophy in which the main goal of the leader is to serve the needs of the team or organization. This can include putting the needs of others before one's own, fostering a sense of community and collaboration, and working to empower others to reach their full potential. The focus is on creating a culture of trust, respect, and inclusivity, and on building a team that is committed to achieving a common goal.