Developing as Servant Leaders

Leading to Serve
VA Psychology Leadership Conference
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Linda W. Belton, FACHE
Deputy Director
National Center for Organization Development

Maureen Cash, PhD
Director, Organizational Health
National Center for Organization Development
Here’s the Agenda....

- Transformation, Culture and Organizational Health
- Servant Leadership 101
- Current Practices
- Overview of VA SL 360/ SL 180
- Seven Pillars
- Supporting and sustaining
- Toolkit & Key Practices
Why
Servant Leadership
In VA?
Scanning the Environment (Foresight)

- Affordable Care Act
- Troops returning after a decade of war
- Congressional/public expectations
- Resource challenges
- Quality, access and timeliness demands
- Workforce barriers
- Heightened Consumer Demands
Servant Leadership & VA: Natural Partners

*Impact on health care challenges:*

- maximizing human investment
- optimizing budget care dollars; creating value
- improving quality and outcomes
- ensuring a positive experience for Veterans/families
- developing leaders with courage and vision
- supporting a transformational environment

*All Things Connected...*
Where Do We Start?
Of the many supervisors I’ve observed over the years, 2 stand out:

Leader A was fond of saying: 
“Rank has its privileges.”
or “Because I said so.”

Leader B quoted Michelangelo as his motto:
“I saw an angel in the marble, and I chiseled until I set it free.”

For which would you rather work? 
Which would you rather be?
The 2,000 year-old Chinese text, “Tao Te Ching,” teaches that the least desirable leader is one whom followers despise and defy; next comes the one whom they fear; better is the one whom they love and praise. But the highest leader is one of whose existence they are barely aware. The greatest success of this leader is that when the task is accomplished, people can say, “We achieved it ourselves!”
Transformational Workplace: All Things Connected

Serving the Veteran
- Patient / Family-Centered Care
- Customer Service
- Safe, Timely, Quality Outcomes

Serving the Employee
- CREW (civility)
- Systems Redesign
- Effective Teams

Serving the Organization
- Integrated Ethics
- Learning Organization
- Servant Leadership

Transformation is Culture Change
What is Organizational Culture?

Taken-for-granted values, assumptions and expectations that characterize organizations and their members.
Summary - What is Culture?

Values of Organization
Personality of an Organization
Blueprint of an Organization
How Things Are Really Done
Water-Cooler Conversations
What Doesn’t Change Around You—When Everything Else Does

Culture Happens by Intention or Default
Leadership Hows / Whats of Culture

- **How** Decisions are Made
- **How** Problems are Resolved
- **How** Bad News is Received
- **How** Conflict is Handled
- **What** Behavior is Modeled
- **What** Behavior is Rewarded
- **How** Information is Shared (or Not)
- **How** nonperformance is handled
Leaders Create the Culture…

Culture spills over into:
- Workplace perceptions
- Organizational performance
- Customer experience

Culture Eats Strategy for Lunch…

Failure to change the culture dooms other organizational change.

Hard Skills

Culture; Organizational Health
Organizational Health in VA

A system-wide process promoted by many VA worksites.
A Healthy Organization...

Nurtures Success in Complex & Chaotic Organizations

Incubator for Transformation

Balances Immediate Tasks With Building Systems That Strengthen Over Time

Connects all Employees Personally to VA Mission

Employees Choose To Work

Veterans Choose to Receive Service

A Healthy Organization is foundation, not fluff
“Ninety percent of what we call ‘management’ consists of making it difficult for people to get things done.”

Peter Drucker
Leadership Described

- Trait Leadership
  - Innate characteristics make people leaders
    - Physical factors (e.g., height)
    - Personality features (e.g., extraversion)
    - Intelligence
    - Language fluency
  - Leadership is restricted to those who possess the right qualities

- Process Leadership
  - Has to do with the context of the interactions between leaders and followers
  - Leadership can be provided by anyone who can learn leader behaviors

A Visual Example of Process Leadership
Leadership Defined

- Leadership is a **process** in which one person **influences** a **group** of people to achieve a **common goal**.
  - *Process* – leaders affect followers and followers affect leaders - it’s an interactive event
  - *Influence* – about *how* the leader affects followers - without influence, leadership does not exist
  - *Groups* – the context in which leadership takes place
  - *Common goals* – directed toward those who are trying to accomplish something together, have a mutual purpose

Transactional Leadership

- Focus is on exchanges that occur between leaders and their followers – what the leader will give in exchange for the follower working toward some goal

- e.g., promotions for employees who surpass goals, politicians who make promises to win votes

Transformational Leadership

- Motivates followers to do more than expected by:
  - Raising followers’ levels of awareness about the importance and value of concrete and idealized goals
  - Getting followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the team or larger organization
  - Moving followers to address higher-level needs
  - Typically incorporates charismatic and visionary leadership
  - Transformational leadership has been found to produce greater results than Transactional

Servant Leadership: Taking it to the Next Level  
(Patterson)

- A logical extension of Transformational Leadership
- Guided by seven Virtuous Constructs
  - Agape
  - Humility
  - Vision
  - Altruism
  - Trust
  - Empowerment
  - Service
- Found to produce greater results than Transformational
Contrasts (Farling)

Transformational Leadership

- Uses personal charisma
- Motivates people to help meet his/her agenda for the organization (investment)
- May share credit

Servant Leadership

- Uses humility and collaboration
- Motivates people to help set the agenda for the organization (ownership)
- Deflects credit
It’s not about *a single style* of leading....
Servant Leadership Correlation to VA Leadership Competencies

- Person of Character
- Puts People First
- Skilled Communicator
- Compassionate Collaborator
- Foresight
- Systems Thinker
- Moral Authority
- Leading People
- Partnering
- Leading Change
- Results Driven
- Global Perspective
- Business Acumen

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
What is unique to SL?

- Focus on serving followers for their own good, not just the good of the organization
- Encouraging growth and development to reach highest potential
- Concern with the success of all stakeholders
- The moral component (moral authority)
- Self-reflection, humility, the art of withdrawal
Servant Leadership…

a philosophy and practice
So, given what you now know about Servant Leadership, are you on track?

More - Same - Less
7 Pillars of Servant Leadership

1. Person of Character
2. Puts People First
3. Skilled Communicator
4. Compassionate Collaborator
5. Has Foresight
6. Systems Thinker
7. Leads With Moral Authority

James Sipe & Don Frick (2009)
“Where there is not community, trust, respect, ethical behavior are difficult for the young to learn and for the old to maintain.” Robert K. Greenleaf

Pillar 1:
Person of Character

- Maintains Integrity
- Demonstrates Humility
- Engages in Value Driven behavior
“The first and most important choice a leader makes is the choice to serve.”
Robert K. Greenleaf

Pillar 2: Puts People First

- Service Driven
- Mentor- Minded
- Shows Care and Concern
What does Servant Leadership look like?

Front

Line

Staff

Mid - Level

Executives

Managers

You are here

You are here

You are here

You are here
“Don't assume, because you are intelligent, able and well-motivated, that you are open to communication, that you know how to listen.”

Robert K. Greenleaf

Pillar 3: Skilled Communicator

- Empathetic Listening
- Invites and Delivers Feedback
- Communicates Persuasively
Servant Leader Key Practice: A Skilled Communicator
INSTRUCTIONS

A Servant Leader practices empathetic listening, invites and delivers feedback effectively, and communicates persuasively. Listening is a ‘healing attitude’.

- Select a timekeeper, a presenter and an observer
- Presenter speaks for two minutes with no interruption
- One minute of silence
- Each person responds for one minute
- Thirty seconds of silence between each response
- Presenter wraps up
- Observer shares observations
DEBRIEFING

How did you feel as the speaker?  As the listener?

How did you feel during the moments of silence?

How does this differ from our usual communication?

What is the value of this activity?
“Even the frankest and bravest of subordinates do not talk with their boss the same way they talk with colleagues.” — Robert K. Greenleaf

**Pillar 4: Compassionate Collaborator**

- Builds Teams and Communities
- Psychological Safety
- First Among Equals
Traditional views of accountability see it as assigning blame and punishment in response to errors, but it is more complex.

Psychological Safety is the Pathway of Accountability

Accountability is recognizing and responding to errors appropriately. The complexity in accountability is that one response is not appropriate for all errors.

Employees must report errors for organizations to recognize and respond to them. Employees need to feel safe to take the interpersonal risk that reporting an error requires.
Psychologically Safe Cultures Improve Patient Care

Veteran patients respond to psychologically-safe care environments.

**Organization-level PS.** In VHA, greater employee PS is related to greater:
- Veterans’ satisfaction with their health care experience^{28}
- Quality of care^{28}
- Loyalty to return to VHA for services^{28}
- Willingness to report errors and serious violations^{29,30}

Organizational learning data show that a PS culture relates to other positive aspects of workplace culture.

**Organization-level PS.** In VA, employee PS is positively associated with:
- Workplace civility^{31}
- Facility innovativeness^{31}
- Perceived quality of workplace leaders^{31}

Examining workplace assessments illuminates PS facilitators.

**Workgroup-level PS.** Managers’ courtesy and consideration toward their staff (i.e., managers who encourage and listen to the ideas and opinions of others) is the top predictor of employee PS perceptions.^{32}

**Organization-level PS.** In VHA, workplace characteristics affect PS:
- **FACILITATORS:** patient-centered workplace culture and approachable leadership^{29}
- **BARRIERS:** blaming/retaliatory environment, low leadership accountability, complex reporting system^{29}
“Foresight is the only ‘lead’ a leader has. Once leaders lose this lead and events start to force their hand, they are not leading, but are reacting to immediate events, and they probably will not long be leaders.”

Robert K. Greenleaf

Pillar 5: Has Foresight

- Visionary

- Anticipates Consequences

- Takes Courageous, Decisive Action
Servant Leader Key Practice

- Foresight is being able to perceive the significance & nature of events before they occur (skating to where the hockey puck will be): it’s the only edge a leader has.

- Having a vision of how things could be improved, be managed, or how service could be raised to the next level. There is an intrinsic and measurable value to understanding where the organization is, what its future goals are, and taking action to support that direction.

- The leader needs to have a sense of the unknowable and be able to foresee the unforeseeable. Abraham Lincoln
Foresight and Ethics (Keith)

• Greenleaf: failure of a leader to foresee events may be viewed as ethical failure, because it can put the organization in a bad situation that might have been avoided.

• Organizations tend to behave unethically when backed into a corner or feel they have no choices left but bad ones.

• University of Illinois study: employees rated leadership behaviors. Most desired behavior- behaving ethically. Biggest gap between current & desired behavior – behaving ethically.
“One is at once, in every moment of time, historian, contemporary analyst, and prophet - not three separate roles. This is what the practicing leader is, every day of his life.”

Robert K. Greenleaf

Pillar 6: Systems Thinker

- Comfortable with Complexity
- Effectively Leads Change
- Stewardship
Three Perspectives on Change

Developmental Change

Continuous improvements of the existing system – “business as usual” – just better

Transitional Change

Move to a new known system/business practice. Organization “unfreezes” the old state, helps employees transition, and then “re-freezes” to a new state.

Transformational Change

Emergence of an organization that values mindfulness and capability where employees are fully engaged and effective. Unknown end state—forever adapting and improving services.

The continuous blending of relationship-centered services, evidence-based practices, learning, and innovation.
“What if we don’t change at all ... and something magical just happens?”
How Can SL Facilitate Change?

- Ensures everyone is involved – throughout the process, at all levels; enlists everyone in the change
- Change is more likely to occur when psych safety is high
- Open to feedback, participation; listens and reflects
- Change for the right reasons, in the right way
- Change isn’t a light switch, it’s an ongoing process. SL’s stay open to tweaking along the way, course correcting when necessary. Not ego-based.
- Shares credit when change goes well; shares concern (not blame) when it doesn’t
- Foresees cultural implications of change
Stewardship:
Leaving the place better than you found it

Balances immediate tasks with building systems that strengthen the organization over time.
“A new moral principle is emerging which holds that the only authority deserving one’s allegiance is that which is freely granted by the led to the leader. (They) will not casually accept the authority of existing institutions; rather, will freely respond only to leaders who are proven and trusted as servants. In the future, the only truly viable institutions will be those that are predominantly servant-led.”

Robert K. Greenleaf

Pillar 7: Leads with Moral Authority

- Shares Power and Control
- Creates a Culture of Accountability
- Inspires Followership
Leaders

Power Model

Positional Authority
Command & Control
Who Messed Up?
The end justifies the means
People Are Tools
Demand loyalty

Service Model

Moral Authority
Guide, Teach & Equip
Glitch Hunts, Not Witch Hunts
Message, mentor & model
Build Communities of Support
Inspire followership
Power vs Service
The more you control others, the more likely it is that they will rebel.

Posner and Kouszes

Lots of things are outside our control. We get to decide who we are going to be and how we are going to live. Servant Leadership is not about giving up one’s self-interest, not about self-sacrifice or self-denial. It’s about self-fulfillment.

Keith

Realistically, someone will be in power. Servant Leaders can accumulate and exercise power, can become angry and do battle, but they do it on behalf of others.

Keith

Control is an illusion.

- Belton
Servant Leadership In Action

Small Group Discussion Applying Servant Leadership
Practices that Strengthen Servant Leaders: the Art of Withdrawal and Reflection
Withdraw to Renew, Refresh, Reflect

- The ability to replenish, reorient and recharge oneself, if only for a moment to:
  - Build in regular opportunities for reflection
  - Gain perspective
  - Sort out the more important from the less important, the important from the urgent
Business Case for Reflection

- Technically complex information is best absorbed
- Emotionally charged situations are better assessed
- Intuition and foresight are most likely to emerge
- Creative thinking and innovation happen
- A meaningful vision for the future comes to light
- Sound, ethical judgments are made
- Courageous, focused decisions become evident
- Connecting with something greater than self occurs
The Art of Withdrawal

The ability to reflect and reorient oneself, if only for a moment...To replenish...To sort out the more important from the less important, and the important from the urgent, and attend to the more important...

Read the article, Effective Leadership and the Fine Art of Systematic Neglect. Now go take a 5 minute reflection break. (Please, no computer, Blackberry, phone, reading, writing or talking.)

Answer the following question when you come back from your reflection break:

How can I encourage creativity and innovation in my workplace?

To help find more time for purposeful withdrawal. Consider making a “Stop Doing” list.

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<th>Task/Activity</th>
<th>Benefits of Stopping</th>
<th>Risks of Stopping</th>
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Reflection

Think honestly about:

• What prevents me from regular reflection?

• What specifically can I do to ensure I build in time for reflection?
Servant Leadership is not a Race:
It’s a Journey
Sowing the Seeds....
Sustaining the Culture
Translating into Practice: Building and Supporting the Culture

• No playbook: only guiding principles
• Every employee must translate principles into practice.
  • What is meaningful to me?
  • Why is this important?
  • What will I do differently?
  • What impact can I have?
• How can my practice of SL improve my work? My relationships?
• How can becoming a SL organization make a difference in VA?
Servant Leadership Assessments

- Introduced Sept. 2013
- MBI added Jan. 2014
- 180° added in January 2015
- A Report
  - Average scores by type of respondent
  - Explanation of scores and the model
  - General Information about SL
  - Tools, tips and templates
  - List of additional resources
  - Development Guide

Contact: Jaimee Robinson, NCOD
SL Assessments

The Servant Leadership 360 and 180 are designed to provide you with an assessment of yourself as a Servant Leader as well as behaviorally-based, actionable information which can be used to form a thoughtful plan to further your Servant Leader goals.

These assessments are based on adaptations of James Sipe and Donald Frick’s model of Servant Leadership, outlined in The Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership (2009). Your assessment will be organized by the following pillars:

- Person of Character
- Puts People First
- Skilled Communicator
- Compassionate Collaborator
- Foresight
- Systems Thinker
- Moral Authority

It is important to note the SL 360 and the SL 180 are not objective measures of performance, but rather indications of how well you are serving the people in your workplace. Your results are intended to be used as a guide for personal development. NCOD consultation is available to assist you in understanding the information and creating a Personal Development Plan that meets your needs.

For more information, contact the VHA National Center for Organization Development at (513) 247-4680 or VHANCOD@va.gov.

Should I take the SL 360?

The SL 360 is complementary to the traditional VA 360 and can be valuable for new and seasoned leaders. Individuals most likely to find the SL 360 useful are those who are:

- Supervising at least three employees
- Interested in personal growth
- Open to being part of organizational transformation
- Dedicated to serving first and leading second
- Driven to get results while contributing to a positive work environment

Or should I take the SL 180?

One of the most important tenets of Servant Leadership is, “We are all leaders, all of the time.” Whether or not you are in a position of authority, you may be a leader on your team, in your family, or in your community. VA needs every employee to be a leader in providing care and service to Veterans. Individuals who will most likely find the SL 180 useful are those who:

- Meet the criteria above, but
- Are not in a formal leadership position

VHA National Center for NCOD Organization Development

We are all leaders, all of the time.
What Do I Do with this Information?

- Interpretation Guide
- Development Guide
- Focus on strengths as well as opportunities for improvement
- Create a Personal Development Plan around the Pillars
- Check in periodically to see how you are doing
- Reassess at a later date
- By simply asking, you’re conveying the message that you are serious about being a Servant Leader. You are exemplifying Servant Leader behavior.
Where Does Your Organization go Next?

- Is Servant Leadership ‘right for you’?
- Executive Team → Supervisor development → Flow through the organization
- SL 360 / SL 180
- Messaging / awareness / modeling
- Specific actions & opportunities
- Encouragement Groups
Where do you go Next? (even if your organization doesn’t)

- Talk about Servant Leadership – raise awareness
- Exhibit SL behaviors & acknowledge them in others (↑ and ↓)
  - Link and Label
- Have a plan to cultivate/sustain for self & sphere of influence
- Seek to serve in more responsible positions. Your sphere of influence will grow as you exercise Servant Leadership. SL is the epitome of ‘Leadership Development’. Your relationships and accomplishments will speak for themselves.
- Don’t wait for the memo! You have the power right now to shift the culture.
- Practice...practice...practice!
Our Role as Servant Leaders

- Be ‘intentional’ about crafting the culture
- Withstand the pressure to ‘live’ in the weeds
- Teach and model
- Build bridges, not silos; community, not competition.
- Create more serving leaders. We’re all leaders, all the time.
- Service is not a byproduct of leadership: it is the whole point.
- I’m not a servant leader unless others see me as one.
The Paradoxical Commandments

by Kent Keith, PhD

The ‘Paradoxical Commandments’ were originally written in 1968 in a booklet for student leaders. Since then they have circled the world and been used by business leaders, military commanders, government officials, religious leaders and university presidents. Mother Teresa displayed them on her wall. They were recited at Whitney Houston’s funeral. Dr. Keith was CEO of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership and is currently CEO of Greenleaf Asia.
A Reflection on Service...
For more information, please contact VHA National Center for Organization Development (NCOD)

Telephone: (513) 247-4680
Email: VHANCOD@va.gov
Website: http://vaww.va.gov/NCOD
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