



ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS: QUIET SERVANT-LEADERS?

Executive Assistants and Servant-Leadership

—KRIS DUGAN

Do you consider yourself a leader, whether it be formal or informal?

I wanted to write this article about servant-leadership/quiet leadership to show the connection to all the quiet leaders in the executive administrative field. Robert K. Greenleaf's definition of servant-leader is "a person who begins with a natural feeling of wanting to serve first—to help, support, encourage, and lift up others. Because of their noble role model, others begin to lead by serving" (1977).

According to Skip Prichard (2013), servant-leaders should possess nine qualities. They should:

1. Value diverse opinions
2. Cultivate a culture of trust
3. Work to develop others
4. Be interested in helping with life issues, not just work issues
5. Encourage others with statements such as "Let's go do it," not "You go do it."
6. Sell instead of tell. Servant-leaders usually persuade others, rather than commanding them.
7. Be very selfless, always thinking of others
8. Make conscious choices to benefit the future
9. Have humility, and not think they are better than others

In today's world, most think that to be a leader you need to be loud and extroverted. More and more, we find that a quiet approach to leadership is much more effective, and that anyone can adopt the quieter leadership style. Those who have analytical and introverted behaviors already in place find



it much easier to lead quietly. Some just have the ability naturally and don't need to learn behaviors.

In relation to quiet leaders, Albert Schweitzer (1963) made the following statement: "Of all the will toward the ideal in mankind only a small part can manifest itself in public action. All the rest of this force must be content with small and obscure deeds. The sum of these, however, is a thousand times stronger than the acts of those who receive wide public recognition. The latter, compared to the former, are like the foam on the waves of a deep ocean" (74).

Quiet leaders work behind the scenes—quietly, carefully, and patiently. Leadership to them is largely a matter of doing the right thing. They look for ways to channel their self-interest in ways that also serve others. Most of what quiet leaders do is unseen, subtle, and often unrewarded. Quiet leaders spend much of their time on small things, but they work very hard to get these small things right. Quiet leadership is what moves and changes the world. Things we can expect from quiet leaders are a focus on action instead of words and an ability to listen and hear what is being said in conversations. Quiet leaders don't have exaggerated egos, they never ask their team to do something they wouldn't do themselves, and they hold themselves to the same standards of accountability that they place on their teams. We see these qualities in many administrative professionals today. They are quiet leaders behind the scenes, making sure things are being done to help the more visible leaders continue being successful; most aren't even aware that they are considered some type of leader. As an administrative professional myself, I never thought of myself as a leader, either formal or informal. I just have always wanted to help, to make things successful, and to be part of something that inspires or encourages others to do the same.

A couple more quotes that I found to be inspirational in relation to this topic:

You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.

—Abraham Lincoln

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has.

—Margaret Mead



Kudos out there to all the quiet leaders. You do a great job, and even though it may not be privately rewarded, your hard work is rewarded two-fold in everyday successes. Thank you for all you do!

Is this quiet servant-leadership?

I say yes.

REFERENCES

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