

That's My Business

According to the Oxford dictionary leadership is: the action of leading a group of people or an organization. This definition is simple and bland and if everything in life was straightforward and literal it would be absolutely correct. Leadership is just leading people. But life is not always straightforward and literal, in fact it rarely is. And what this definition doesn't show is the fact that there is so much more happening beneath the faded image that those words present. It doesn't show the countless hours spent preparing and training and working to gain people's trust and respect in order to lead well. It doesn't say that leaders can be loud or silent each holding their own impact, and it does not state all the factors involved in building great leadership.

Bill Hybels, pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, one of the most attended churches in North America, which hosts the Global Leadership Summit every year said that, "great leadership by definition is relentlessly developmental". This is something that I have found proved true again and again throughout my experiences both in leading and in being led. It is the cornerstone needed to build great leadership because in order to grow as leaders we must first recognize that leadership is a constant developing process. You are never finished learning from others, and building character. Recognizing that leadership is relentlessly developmental helps us to appreciate our mistakes and failures and the wisdom gained from those experiences. It brings you to a place of humility where you can openly admit when you were wrong and learn from all those around you.

Apart from recognizing that leadership is relentlessly developmental, leaders must also have vision. Vision and passion are so important when it comes to good leadership, because if a leader is not completely devoted to their cause the followers will notice and in turn also become disengaged. I see this all the time in school, when a teacher is passionate about what they are teaching the students actually want to be too. Bill Hybels also said that, "a leader's most valuable asset is not their time but their energy and their ability to energize others". Leadership is someone taking their passion and energy for a grander vision and fueling other people, drawing them in, until you have a whole group working for a single purpose. But leadership doesn't stop once the people buy in. Leaders must continue to go alongside their people, encouraging them and leading by example. Leaders must be open minded and committed to resolving relational conflict. They must be self aware and selfless. And most of all leaders must recognize that they are not there to make followers but rather to make more leaders. Seeking out the gold in others and using their gift of leadership to direct and empower all the other gifts.

Personally, I do not like to use the word volunteer because it makes me sound as though I am boasting in what I am doing for others and if that is the case than am I really doing it for others? I prefer to use the term serve, because what I do, I do to give back to a community and a people who have given so much to me, like a way of saying thank you. Freely serving is so important because it gives you a whole new perspective, it changes the light in which you see different circumstances when you are not just thinking of the benefits you will reap in the end. And believe me the benefits you reap from serving are, in my opinion, as valuable, if not more than those you acquire from a steady job. Serving builds character, compassion, and allows you to have experiences that you can get nowhere else. Serving not only impacts one's self but their community as well. Besides being there to support different businesses and provide help with no terms and conditions, serving also creates citizens of character who in turn bring good and growth to their community's well-being.

The volunteering opportunities that I have been a part of have changed over the years. I serve in the children's ministry in my church, and also volunteered for a year at *This Little Light Artistry*, a local art studio where I am now employed. Throughout my years in school I have helped with many assorted projects and events such as partnering with helping hands and doing food drives as well as providing hampers for families in need. I also got the chance to be a part of several events where we bought music to the community, such as music in the park where we played for seniors at the heritage centre, and in a few weeks our school's senior jazz band will be playing at the Niverville Fair.

The leadership roles that I have taken on are being the treasurer for NCI's Student Council, representing my school as the senior member of Hanover School Division's Superintendent Student Advisory Council, and being a yearbook editor. I am also one of the leads in our school's drama production which places on me the role of leading and encouraging and supporting my other younger cast mates. One big opportunity that I was able to lead in for many years was being the captain of our girls' basketball team from grade eight to grade ten. Leadership in sports is so important and sometimes very difficult because you have to bring together a group of very different people and unite them. Not only that but you must always lead by example and give your all. Encourage them when the going gets hard and you lose, and celebrate with them when you win. And above all you must never lose hope because a leader's attitude affects everyone else on the team. I also work as an art teacher at *This Little Light Artistry* where I teach three groups of incredibly unique and energetic young girls from ages 5 to 12. But to me one of the most important areas where I lead is as a big sister to my younger siblings. They are constantly watching and I want to be someone worth looking up to, someone who inspires and encourages them constantly.

I am not sure yet what I want to do in the future but I know that business is in everything and leadership even more so. A good business rests on the shoulders of good leadership. It is essential in order for a business to thrive. Because in business and in life in general there are many difficult decisions and a leader is someone who knows how to make difficult decisions when there is no one else they can rely on, someone who can think on the fly, and can offer advice rather than just receiving it. A business is a team effort but we leaders to empower the team members to be the best they can be.

Already engaging in leadership roles and especially in volunteer services helps develop the type of leader which everyone wants and needs because it develops humility, selflessness, honesty and integrity. Things that you don't often associate with business because often business just looks like people trying to get the best deal they can. But in actuality humility, selflessness, honesty and integrity in business are what sets people apart and helps their communities.

It's a chain effect, volunteers produce servant hearted leaders who grab hold of their passions turning them into visions which build great businesses who then take on volunteers and it all begins again, making businesses that are run with humility, honesty and integrity, where leaders work to raise more leaders working towards a grander vision. That's my business.