

# This is why Servant Leadership Can Benefit and Improve your Business

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## Introduction

The widely understood definition of leadership is the action of leading a group of people or an organisation. For a business to move in the intended direction, there needs to be an effective leader in place who will guide the organisation as a whole in the direction to achieve the vision. Many people believe that solely being placed in a leadership position automatically makes you a leader but this is not always the case. Being called a 'manager' or 'director' is just a title but the real gold is in the action that you take while being in that position. This is why so often some leaders are identified long before they are entrusted with the responsibilities that come with the title. Titles do not create leaders. Not surprising but some people do not have leadership skills who are given such titles for many reasons unknown and the result may take the organisation back rather than move at least a step forward.

There is a variety of leadership styles that one may fall into but in this article, the focus is on servant leadership: what it is and its benefits to an organisation and its employees.

## What is servant leadership?

Servant Leadership is a holistic leadership approach which focuses on follower development in rationale, relational, ethical, emotional and spiritual dimensions. As the leader invests in the development of employees, employees reciprocate by maximizing their efforts towards higher levels of performance. Servant leadership focus on the intent to first serve, to be a steward and to have the personal integrity of leaders. Followers of servant leaders consider their leaders to be dependable, selfless and moral, hence followers have higher confidence, job satisfaction and engagement. In turn, performance in the organisation is increased.

## The dimensions of servant leadership

Servant leadership is not a one-dimensional phrase but rather a construct of several dimensions that make up servant leadership. Below are the dimensions that make up servant leadership:

- **Voluntary Subordination:** The leader's willingness to put the needs of others before their own. Voluntary subordination includes having the manager strip themselves of their superior status and privileges that come with the title. This does not mean that servant leadership results in the leader being taken advantage of as many may believe.
- **Authentic Self:** The display of humility, accountability, security, integrity, security and vulnerability. Showing one's true self helps for their subordinates to truly allow themselves to be

fully guided by the leader in question. Not showing your true self may lead to distrust and where there is no trust, there is wisdom.

- **Covenantal Relationship:** Genuine and lasting leader-follower relationship through shared value and mutual trust. It is important for a leader to share the same values as those of the organisation and for them to be on the same wavelength as the subordinates that they are leading.
- **Responsible Morality:** Having an ethical disposition that ensures that means and ends are morally legitimised and ethically justified. For example, when an individual receives the praise that they are not deserving of. Directing it to the deserving person instead of taking it for themselves forms a part of this.
- **Transcendental Spirituality:** An extent to which leaders foster a sense of interconnectedness and meaning among employees as work. Working with people requires for there to be some sort of connection amongst the team. Being detached may result in people being detached from the work that they do which in turn affects performance.
- **Transforming Influence:** The leader brings a sense of change through vision, empowering, role modelling and mentoring followers. This is in tune with transformational leadership where a leader invokes a sense of transformation beyond the financial required results of the company.

### **Servant leadership and its effects on organisational performance**

It is known that servant leaders see themselves as stewards of the organisation they lead, however, they do not ignore performance expectations and standards even though they focus on personal development. Unlike performance-orientated leadership approaches that often sacrifice their people for profit and growth. Servant leadership focus on sustainable performance over the long run.

A widely confused belief is that servant leadership is another term for transformational but this is not the case. The two styles of leadership are different from each other. Servant leadership works through follower need satisfaction, whereas transformational leadership is influenced by follower outcomes through perceived leadership effectiveness.

Previous studies have found that servant leadership has a direct relationship with organisational performance as measured by return on investment. Although this a positive step towards the revelation of servant leadership, some studies found no direct link between servant leadership and organisational performance. Therefore, there is a call for more research to be done on the context in which servant leadership can be applied to affect organisational performance. This, however, does not mean that this type of leadership is not highly beneficial for the organisation.

### **What are some expected advantages of Servant Leadership?**

Over and above increased employee performance in the organisation, servant leadership may result in other benefits for the organisation. Below are two major ways in which servant leadership may benefit any business.

- **Employee loyalty** – Unlike the other more traditional management styles, servant leadership encourages employees to get involved in all aspects of the decision-making process. Feeling

included may be the push for employees to start contributing their much-needed ideas into the workplace. When employees function as a group with common goals, a strong sense of loyalty is built over time. A loyal workforce can result in numerous rewards for the organisation as a whole – including better retention and top performance. Most importantly, feelings of loyalty among your employees will foster better recruitment hiring outcomes, as your current employees will likely refer family and friends to your employment opportunities.

- A stronger culture - Because a servant leadership style sparks trust and honesty within an organisation, the culture will inherently become stronger and more cohesive among your employees. When your team feels comfortable expressing themselves and going to upper management with their concerns, every employee will feel empowered and entrusted to perform their jobs with independence and integrity. This creates a bond among members of your team to turn to one another for help when needed, as well as provide each other support when challenges arise.

## **Conclusion**

There are different types of managing styles which benefit the organisation. The focus here was on servant leadership which should be more talked about. Many times, managers result in authoritative leadership, believing that fear is what drives subordinates to perform. Unfortunately, this is not the case and in many cases, employees end up leaving the organisation which results in the organisation using more of its finances to look for a new suitable employee.

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