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ORGL 680 Existential Reflection Paper

Leadership Reflection

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September 18, 2015

## ORGL 680 Existential Reflection Paper: Leadership Reflection

This paper will explore my personal leadership philosophy beginning with a reflection of what my leadership perspective was when starting my journey to earn a Master's Degree in the Organizational Leadership Program at Gonzaga University. It will include areas of personal growth, 'ah-ha moments,' and course learnings which helped to cultivate my perspective and shape my current views. Finally, this paper will conclude with a comment to guide my continued growth as a leader.

### **EARLY LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY**

“Thoughts become words. Words become actions. Actions become habits. Habits become character. Character becomes destiny” (unknown). This quote nicely summarizes my early leadership philosophy. I came into this program knowing that character describes our personality and is shaped by a combination of our moral and mental qualities as well as how we demonstrate who we are through our decisions and our actions. Good character is essential for effective leadership and is modeled by those willing to build upon their experiences in order to continually develop and maintain a strong and resilient character.

My early philosophy included a belief that people have an innate desire to do well. Generally, we are all good people. Jack Lowe Jr. gave a worthy description of the nature of people with his thoughts regarding how he believes people want to do the right thing. He feels people generally want to be responsible, they want to help others, they want to be part of something that is good, and they want to be good at what they do (Lowe, n.d.).

Through maintaining and modeling good character we are able to develop skills and abilities which will enable us to treat others with dignity and respect, make decisions which are fair and reasonable, be confident in our actions, demonstrate emotional maturity, and conduct

ourselves in many other constructive ways that support effective leadership. In effect, this describes the quote regarding my early philosophy of leadership; through our core thoughts and actions, we determine our destiny.

### **PRESENT PHILOSOPHY**

Through my course work, and my experiences both on campus and online, my leadership philosophy has evolved. In conducting a research project in ORGL 501, I grew both personally and professionally; I became closer to my organization by understanding it from a different perspective; I became more deeply connected to my co-workers, family, and friends through developing a deeper understanding of the human spirit and an appreciation of how diverse we are based on our experiences, generational differences, and motivators.

I gained an understanding of transformational leadership through many different sources including Bass, 1990; Bass & Bass, 2008; Bass & Riggio, 2006, Eisenbeiss, Boerner, & Knippenberg, 2008; and Koehler & Pankowski, 1997. These resources helped me to understand that I could inspire others by understand their individual needs and motivations. I learned how I could positively affect team climate and team innovation by strengthening the partnership within teams.

Additionally (and not to butter up the professor), through the process of climbing a mountain, I learned how important it is to take care of myself in order to be able to take care of others. Through ORGL 689 Leadership and Hardiness, I was given a different perspective of leadership through the use of the metaphor of a mountain as the leadership challenge. The course and Warner and Schmincke's book, *High Altitude Leadership*, both captivated me. The lessons played out on the mountain, and outlined in the book prepared me to be more confident not only in the climb, but in facing the challenges I did along the way and the challenges I face

as a leader every day. Through the course, I refueled my desire to maintain a higher fitness level; I gained greater confidence in myself by working through known weaknesses; I recognized how important it is to receive, as well as to give, hardi-social support; and, through Kay LeClaire, I gained greater insight about what makes me a pretty resilient person – a good work ethic and a sense of humor.

My ‘ah-ha’ moment arrived upon attending Larry’s Spears’ elective course, ORGL 690 Contemporary Issues in Servant Leadership. By developing a greater sense of servant leadership, I began to feel whole in regards to how and why this entire leadership program has affected me the way it has and to understand the reasons I was so drawn to the program in the first place. It was definition I was seeking, and I found it in developing my final paper for this particular course. As I wrote the paper, A Calling to Serve: Promoting Servant Leadership in Law Enforcement, the entire program came into clear focus for me.

With each course I engaged in, a common theme began to emerge – I began to understand the theories and meanings behind my own personal philosophy. I was given substance that helped me to understand my own leadership perspective. My early philosophy did not necessarily change, but I developed a definition for it – I could articulate what I believed to be good and effective leadership because I had been given the substance to more thoroughly and more deeply understand it.

My journey has led me to this thought about my leadership philosophy today; as simple as it may seem, our thoughts do ultimately determine our destiny. This occurs through our personal vision, mission, or credo, as it may be. Effective leaders must have a vision of their future. That vision – that destiny - must begin with a thought.

### **POTENTIAL FOR LEADERSHIP GROWTH**

Another valuable insight I learned in this program is an understanding of pentimento. Pentimento is an Italian word used by artists to describe the “reappearance in a painting of an original drawn or painted element which was eventually painted over by the artist” (Pentimento). The word describes the development of an artist’s work as the artist sees areas which can be adjusted, changed, or improved in order to create his masterpiece. When those changes appear, a pentimento can be seen; a noticeable change from what once was to what now is.

I envision my leadership philosophy to both change and stay the same. As I grow, my philosophy will always carry with it those basic cornerstones of who I was when I first entered this program to what I have grown to be as I prepare to conclude this particular chapter in my leadership experience. The pentimento will be visible; I am - and will always be - someone who values character. As I make changes and adjust my philosophy, it will be through the insight I gain from future successes and failures and through experiences I allow into my heart. My character, however, will always be defined by one word – love.

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