

# INSPIRE

## On Leadership

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### The Benefits of Servant Leadership

I've been blessed to serve in a variety of leadership roles throughout my career and work with several extraordinary individuals and teams. I've always felt a strong sense of purpose along with a desire to serve and a commitment to lead by example. My priority has always been to take care of the people I work with and create a culture where everyone feels valued and supported and engaged in fulfilling the mission of our institution and positively impacting the communities we serve.

This approach to leadership differs from the traditional leadership approach where there is an accumulation and exercise of power by those at the top. Servant leaders, conversely, share power with their team, put the needs of others first and help people develop and perform as highly as possible. Servant leadership moves beyond the transactional aspects of management and instead actively seeks to develop and align an employee's sense of purpose with the company mission. Moreover, servant leaders are focused primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong.

Servant leadership is gaining popularity and the benefits of this approach to leadership are many. For example, this leadership style has been shown to increase employee satisfaction, reduce turnover and improve organizational performance. In

addition, servant leaders foster a culture of trust and collaboration where employees feel more engaged and purpose-driven and, as a result, perform at enhanced, innovative levels. Finally, servant leadership breeds long-lasting success as well-trained and trusted team members continue to develop as future leaders, thus helping to ensure the long-term viability of the institution.

To practice this approach to leadership you must understand the power and responsibility of your role as a leader and continuously prioritize the needs of those you serve. You will also need to be sincere, transparent and consistent in your efforts to ensure your team knows you truly care about them and are committed to their success. This can be challenging when time is short, and resources are scarce. However, the benefits of servant leadership far outweigh the costs and your efforts will lead to both improved performance within your own organization and, more importantly, a team of dedicated employees driven to follow your lead and foster positive change throughout the communities in which they live and work.

"The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant." – Max De Pree

*Jeff Hill is the Regional President - Wisconsin for Herzing University.*

