

Executive Book Summary

LDRS 591 Organizational
Behavior and
Development

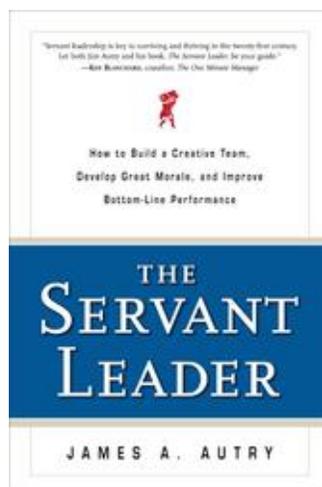
The Servant Leader
Keith Walker

THE SERVANT LEADER

By: James A. Autry

In Summary:

James A. Autry, a top-business consultant and former Fortune 500 executive, suggests that servant leadership is leadership the right way. By becoming a practitioner of servant leadership, one will be rewarded with emotional, psychological, and spiritual fulfillment, not only for one's self, but also for everyone involved. Servant Leadership enhances productivity, encourages creativity, and will benefit the bottom line. Autry teaches you why servant leadership can be the guiding light to becoming the kind of leader and person you want to be by discovering how to— *maintain your spiritual focus, provide guidance during conflict, assure your continued growth as a leader, train other managers in servant leadership, and rectify morale problems.*



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“As a manager, much of the psychological, emotional, and financial well-being of other people is dependent on you and on how well you create the circumstances and the environment in which they can do their jobs.”

“LEADERSHIP IN SERVICE OF OTHERS REQUIRES A GREAT DEAL OF COURAGE. IT WAS FAR EASIER TO BE THE OLD TOP-DOWN KIND OF BOSS...”

Autry, James A. (2001). *The Servant Leader. How to Build a Creative Team, Develop Great Morale, and Improve Bottom-Line Performance.* Roseville: Prima Publishing.

Introduction

“Our organization is very different from other organizations.”

In actuality, the opposite of this is true. One organization may have a different product or a different mission. Yet another organization has a different manufacturing process or distribution system. Organizations may have very little in common, but that does not make them different. All organizations depend on people, and that dependency makes all organizations more similar than dissimilar.



“Again, this is not to be arrogant but to express my strong belief that leadership, or management if you prefer, approached properly is a calling.”

“We feel that your ideas would take too much time; they’re not efficient.”

Autry argues this point. He feels that efficiency is not the same as effectiveness. An example of this is illustrated by the American automobile industry’s embrace of efficiency in the 1960’s and 70’s, that came at the expense of effectiveness, or quality, and allowed the Japanese auto industry to gain an immense share of the market. Anything needed done well will take time, and cutting time for the sake of efficiency surely spells disaster.

“If the people are led in a way that allows them all to be effective, then efficiency follows. It does not work the other way around.”

“What you teach is the soft side of management, and that just doesn’t work very well in an organization like ours.”

Is servant leadership only for *softy saps*, or is it a hopelessly romantic notion for people who ask, “Why can’t we all just love one another?” Autry puts this challenge out to those who think servant leadership is easy or soft, “why don’t you give it a try and get back to me?” There is nothing soft or easy about this kind of caring leadership, because it works and it gets results. The results attained through servant leadership come regardless of what type of organization it is practiced in. And, there is nothing easy about leading as a resource to serve others.





A Foundation of Character and Vision

Characteristics of the Leader as Servant

The Five Ways of Being

- **Be Authentic**.....simply stated this means be yourself, be real. To be yourself, you must first know yourself, and this requires silence, meditation, and prayer or self-exploration. This is more than being truthful.
- **Be Vulnerable**.....be honest about your feelings in the context of your work by being open and honest with your doubts and fears of an idea, concerns about an employee, and your own performance. Having the courage to say “I’m sorry” and meaning it whole heartedly is being vulnerable. This takes a great deal of courage as it shows people that we cannot always be in control and dependence on others is vital.
- **Be Accepting**.....this is more important than approval. Think of a marriage or friend relationship, or parenting as an environment where this behavior is prevalent. You must be able to accept everyone’s ideas as valid for discussion and review, not blindly accept everyone’s ideas without discussion or judgment. As well, one must be able to focus on the ideas themselves, not only on the person. You must also do away with the notion of there always being a winner and a loser. Accept people just as they would want to be accepted, without the need for approval.
- **Be Present**.....have your whole self available at all times. You have to be available to access your values and use them for the work at hand, and be available to others as you people them authentically and in full acceptance. This includes being grounded and centered in the midst of any crisis, big or small. By doing this, you will empower your people to be more assured and confident in their own actions.
- **Be Useful**.....put yourself in the service of others. Be a resource for your people. Assure that the people in your organization get the resources they need to complete the task at hand in the best possible manner.

“Leadership is less concerned with pep talks and more concerned with creating a place in which people can do good work, can find meaning in their work, and can bring their spirits to work.”

Understanding the Three Aspects of Vision

Purpose - this describes the greater reason for an organization’s existence. Without an understanding of purpose, an organization will become counterproductive. It is the sense of purpose that acts like the beacon of a lighthouse to highlight the potential for finding importance in every job. The purpose should always answer the question “Why Are We Here?”, and use language that everyone involved can understand. In an educational setting this could be to educate all children according to their particular needs.

Mission - this describes what an organization does to fulfill its purpose. The question that needs answering here is “What Do We Do?” In education, what do we do to educate children. It is important to understand that an organization’s mission can change, but rarely will its purpose. Mission also includes the goals of the individuals within an organization and the goals of the organization itself.

Values - this describes how the people relate to one another as they go about pursuing their mission in order to accomplish their purpose. The values amidst an organization come from the people, but it is the servant leader’s responsibility to guide the development of these values. Values are principally about social culture, and they include values such as integrity, respect, teamwork, honesty, and trust.

Servant Leader as Manager: The Everyday Nuts and Bolts

Finding The Right People

The following are questions from a sample questionnaire developed by Autry to be used as a guide in finding that right person who will accept the servant leadership culture and blossom in it:

1. What is your own personal purpose for pursuing the professional life you have chosen?
2. Do you think most people want to do a good job?
3. Would you rather be thought of as a manager or as a team player?
4. What is your attitude regarding your responsibility for your employee's whole life?
5. What are the qualities you admire most in a leader?
6. If you could create the perfect workplace, how would it look?
7. If you could write your own epitaph, what would it say about you as a person and as a leader?

"A person hoping to become a servant leader must recognize that effectiveness and productivity are directly affected by situations and occurrences outside the workplace."

Training the Servant Leader

According to Autry, to train the next wave of servant leaders, you must prepare them for that management style, educate them in the ways of servant leadership, and train them by modeling properly behavior. This process is an ongoing affair, where never will come a time where one can be able to say, "Well, we've done the servant leadership thing; time to move to the next thing." Autry offers one quick tip to those new to servant leadership; when tempted to tell someone what to do, instead ask, "What do you think you should do now?" Some other tangible things you can do as leader to illuminate the new way is to schedule short classes or seminars, prepare and display reading lists, bring in speakers, and show videos.

"Remember this: The transition to a servant leader workplace is not an episode or an event; it is a never-ending process of which you are the most important element. You have to walk the walk and talk the talk."

The Tools of the Trade

Autry spells out three specific tools he suggests using as a way to fine-tune understandings and provide assurances within the workplace:

1. **Job Descriptions** - this begins with a job title and a general paragraph describing the overall purpose of the job. This paragraph should ask questions such as, "Why does this job exist?", "What is it to accomplish generally" and "What is its relationship to other jobs in the organization?" Next, is a list of job functions, which are general in nature, without timelines or deadlines attached.
2. **Performance Standards** - this document directs each person's activities for a specific amount of time. Individual employees formulate their own standards, in conversation with the leader. Next, the employee proceeds to writing, and, after possibly another discussion, a final agreement is made.
3. **Performance Appraisals** - this is a meeting between the leader and the employee to formally assess how the employee has accomplished the performance standards. One might begin the process by sending out a blank appraisal form to the employee to engage in a self-appraisal. The last step in this process is a rating of some sort. This may be in words or a number may be given.

Coping with the High-Tech Workplace

Myths of the High-Tech Workplace

- **Myth One:** We are more connected.
- **Myth Two:** All our electronic tools have made communication faster, better, and more accurate.
- **Myth Three:** Having people come to a central place to work in groups is being made obsolete by the new tools.
- **Myth Four:** When people multitask they get more done.

"I suggest that e-mailing is great for sending information, but generally lousy for communicating."

The Harsh Realities of Organizational Life

Organizational Issues

The Negative Appraisal

- One must set a time and place to face the negative appraisal head-on.
- The meeting does not have to be confrontational, but the employee may disagree with your appraisal and may even try to argue it
- It is helpful to think of the negative appraisal as a caring confrontation in which, no matter what the response of the employee, you must demonstrate that you are doing this because you care that the person is given as good chance to succeed.

Firing People

- This act should always be the last resort, however, the failure of person in one job affects the whole organization.
- Autry recommends being as generous as possible to the employee, while remaining within the boundaries of policy; length of notice, outplacement, letters of reference, and severance pay.
- Allowing the employee to participate in the wording of the announcement, if desired. Or have it presented as a resignation.

Layoffs

- The first to know should be those who are to be laid off.
- Explain the reasons for the action, the difficulty of the decision, and the outcomes one expects.
- Honor the laid of employees by conveying appreciation for their efforts.
- Be as generous as possible with severance, continuation of benefits, and outplacement support..
- Give first considerations for any existing job openings to those being laid off.

“The servant leader understands that nothing positive can be accomplished in an organization without the support of those who are to do the hard

Personal Issues

Sickness & Disability

- Your personal response to this situation should begin with the desires of the employee. Some employees will want to stay on the job, no matter the severity of the illness. Very few will take the benefit of a sick-leave and be alone in their struggles.
- Secondly, if the morale of the organization suffers greatly with the presence of the ill employee, one can appeal directly to the employees to turn their attention to the work at hand, or arrange for a counselor to come in.

Alcoholism & Substance Abuse

- Autry believes that these abuses should be treated as illnesses.
- One should place the employee as t the center of concern, with the intention being to help that employee get well.
- Autry suggests using the performance standards as a place to begin the confrontation, as one cannot say “Jim, you’re a drunk!”.
- Lay out a bottom line, such as rehab and treatment or you are fired.

Office Romances

Do not try to the morality police but one must act in the following circumstances:

- The couple become so preoccupied that they begin to ignore their work.
- The couple may be inappropriately open in their displays of affection
- One person in the relationship may tire of the affair while the other may want to hold on.

In either situation, one’s involvement must be work-related, and the bottom-line approach is recommended.

Sexual Harassment

First, one must adhere to the laws and policies of your organization. However, if your organization allows some discretion, the first step is to talk to the person making the complaint. Try to determine if he/she was personally/directly harassed or was placed in an “environment of sexual innuendo”. If it is personal/direct harassment, Autry suggests contacting your human resource or legal department. If it is an environment of innuendo, then one must make a reasonable attempt to intervene and stop the harassment. Autry also suggests frequent sexual harassment seminars and address this behavior as a power issue of great concern.

Legal Issues

Lawsuits - Autry believes that the question is not if you will be sued, but when. One should not consider a lawsuit a war. As a servant leader, one should uphold the perspective that legal actions are part of the democratic process. One may become passionate, or even angry over the issue, but that passion and anger should not be projected to the plaintiff. Simply, use one’s judgment when there is about to be lawsuit; when it comes to discussing the matter with the plaintiff outside the legal offices or courtroom. If a personal contact has promise, than take the chance. As long as one does not threaten or coerce, which a servant leader does not do anyway, a judge would rarely, if ever, fault the action.

“But if you can stay the course, maintain your balance, remain centered and focused, and act with integrity and authenticity, you can continue to create a vibrant and creative community of work while navigating the inevitable rough spots.”

Finding the Balance

Servant Leadership & the Crisis of Loyalty

6 Loyalty Myths

1. Loyalty should be a condition of employment
2. Loyalty is only a feeling, thus is difficult to perceive with certainty.
3. Long hours are a sign of loyalty, the most loyal employees being those who spend the most time at the workplace.
4. The most loyal people are those who do not make waves but accept policies, procedures, and decisions without question or debate.
5. The loyal person does not seek or consider job opportunities in other organizations.
6. Loyalty is long-term or not at all, and can never episodic.

Autry believes that for an employee to be loyal, it is simply doing the job that is agreed upon at the best of one's ability, while acting in the best interest of the organization. Autry also states that the organization and its leaders need to be loyal to their employees by being honest and trusting, treating people as individuals not as numbers, responding appropriately to special needs, providing resources, and acting with integ-

“The servant leader does not operate out of ego and does not expect the old-time personal loyalty to the boss. Instead, the servant leader must understand the true nature of loyalty, then work to nurture it.”

Conflict

Most conflict in the workplace is about personality and style and not about product or process. Conflict that is left unaddressed can poison the atmosphere well beyond just the workers most directly involved. As a servant leader, one must realize that you cannot make people like each other. Rather, the goal should be that people care about one another in the context of what they do together, as their connection as participants in the community of work must go beyond their personal differences. The trick for the servant leader is to attempt to prevent disagreement about ideas from eroding into personal conflict. Autry believes that the best way to keep disagreements from turning into conflict is to recognize when it's likely to happen and intervene in a positive way. Two suggestions of intervention are *Affirmations* and *Circles of Silence*.

The Responsibilities of Family and Community Life

Long Hours, Burnout, and the Job as Hiding Place

There must be a balance between a worker's work and personal time, or that person will not be productive for long. It is not appropriate for a leader to assure that an employee devotes time and energy to their home and family, but one can assure that they have time to do so and that their jobs cannot be used as hiding places. Autry defines burnout as a crisis of the spirit, not a crisis of time. Being a servant leader means being present and paying attention to the work habits of employees. Autry encourages sending clear signals that working nights and weekends is not a key to success. This requires that the servant leader considers the big picture and not fall victim to the temptation to settle for increased productivity in the short-term.

Community Involvement

The vast field of community activities offers great potential for the kind of employee involvement that can have considerable reward for one's organization as well as for the employee. A servant leader should provoke their employees to volunteer on committees and boards, to do hands-on service work, and fund-raise. In addition, they should receive time off to attend meetings and special events. These occurrences offer excellent opportunities for both professional and personal growth. As well, the reputation of the organization in the community will be considerably enhanced.

Leadership When Things Go Bad

If there is ever a time when it is particularly challenging for servant leaders to remain focused, it is in the face of crisis or failure. A true servant leader realizes that one may only influence people and events, not control them, and this takes courage and faith. During times of crisis and failure people most often want and need to be able to find meaning in their work and to feel it is important. As well, they need to see the leader remaining calm and centered in the midst of all of this. It is definitely okay to express one's concerns, but people do not need to have other's fears imposed on them, they do not need to hear rumor or gossip, and they most certainly do not need an environment of increased stress and anxiety. Simply, a servant leader will want to stay off peoples' backs and allow them to do their jobs.

“Servant leadership is not only good-time leadership. Its value to you and your people has even more meaning and impact during the times when people are worried and struggling.”

Epilogue: Script for a Future Slide Show

The book concludes with an interesting approach to an epilogue. In 24 snap shots of workplace situations in 2015, Autry gives a glimpse of what life will be in the future with servant leadership. Here's a synopsis of some of the slides Autry presents:

- **Slide One:** This is a shot of a parking lot where there are no signs such as executives only, no elitism at all. The only sign visible is the one marking reserved sites for employees with disabilities.
- **Slide Two:** A shot of the CEO's office. It is small but adequate for a meeting place as well as a desk.
- **Slide Three:** A shot of another office similar in size to that of the CEO's. However, this is the office of a lower-level sales person. Seems everyone gets an office of similar size, as long as it suits their needs.
- **Slide Four:** Here's a shot of a meeting. The manager is in the middle of a circle holding her evaluation form that her employees completed on her.
- **Slide Nine:** This is a picture of a luncheon meeting of a twelve-step group, similar to Alcoholics Anonymous. The difference here is that the group is not limited to any specific problem. It is neat to see the meeting taking place in the workplace, as that is where most of the stress is caused in the first place.
- **Slide Ten:** Another lunch time activity in this slide: an aerobics class. To hold down medical costs, employees have to pay part of their medical premiums (no news here) but the difference is that this organization gives a discount to employees who participate in fitness or stress management programs.
- **Slide Eleven:** Yet another photo of a meditation guided imagery class. The idea is that these programs result in fewer health-care claims and the employees are a lot happier with themselves and others around them.
- **Slide Twelve:** This here is a party scene. The party is for a man who is retiring. However, he will not be leaving the company fully. This man will now become, at his request, the company's representative to a social service organization, or some other volunteer service.
- **Slide Fourteen:** Just an empty desk here. The desk belongs to a man who is home on parental leave with his wife. He is being paid full salary for the first three weeks, and no negative impact on his vacation benefits.
- **Slide Fifteen:** This is a picture of a woman just back from an education leave. The woman paid her own tuition, but the company paid her full salary and benefits. In return, the woman agreed to return to the company for a specified number of years.

“What I’m trying to prove is that there is a better way to be in organizational life, a way that will produce more of every kind of reward - emotional, psychological, spiritual, and financial - for everyone involved, employees, managers, the owners (stockholders), and the society.”



“But by no means was I able to accomplish the perfect workplace. That, on the face of it, is an impossibility because there will always be a higher standard to achieve, if for no other reason than the reality of people’s expectations and their capacity to grow.”