

The Leadership of a High Performance Sport Development Staff

Jed Smith¹

¹University of Northern Iowa

In the field of strength and conditioning, where the management of the athlete, as well as the administration of the high performance sport development staff is imperative, a servant leadership approach is necessary to effectively motivate performance through the wearisome day to day work load. Professionals must direct their utmost importance upon executing short term tasks, mid-range goals and in long-term mission completion. Van Dierendonck (2011) described servant leadership as displayed in the empowerment and the development of people, conveyed by authentically providing direction, demonstrating stewardship with the act of taking care of your staff and the organization, by being humble with the understanding that no work is beneath you, and through interpersonal acceptance established by taking ownership of the positive and negative ramifications of your decisions. A servant leader understands there is reciprocity within the organization and a strong affiliation with individuals that builds a relationship of trust through fairness.

Looking deeper into what can aid the high performance director in guiding both the staff and the high performance athletes, one can apply what has been observed in the leadership sciences. (Sotiriadou & Bosscher, 2013). Since the beginning of time there have been leaders and followers. From the onset of this relationship, people have been trying to better understand the forces involved in establishing power and control. Regardless of what organization, group, assembly, or collection of individuals with a common cause, there exists a hierarchical structure that forms either formally or informally. How does a leader acquire power? The answer to this question has been debated over time, researched and studied both properly and casually, and is one of the most coveted and important answers in human history. (Halevy, Chou,

& Galinsky, 2011).

With where does power come? Are leaders born or are they made? Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009) discovered that, when studying both identical and fraternal twins, only 30% of leadership characteristics and abilities are found to be from genetic make-up, whereas the remaining 70% of their abilities seem to stem from the individuals environmental influences and surroundings.

This is an interesting finding because it validates the United States Military Academy at West Point's philosophy that leaders are not born, but made. The U.S. Army's "Bench Project" adheres to a time-tested system of leader development that brings a cadet through a multi-faceted approach to transform an individual's mindset and aid the student in appropriate decision making in their future. (Leader to Leader Institute, 2007).

How is leadership power obtained to set up the Leader-Follower-Situational Framework? This is a very complicated and layered answer. According to both the Leader to Leader Institute (2007), paralleled by the work done by Avolio et al. (2009), common denominators afforded a leader the ability to exert power and have control over their followers within given situations. Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy (2012) demonstrated that perceived power can be gained by certain physical characteristics, such as uniform, choice of clothing, posture, voice, and physical stature. Rank and perceived knowledge creates automatic situations of power, based on the initial impression of deserved promotion and experience the ranking individual allegedly holds. Reputation, connections and relationships can earn individuals a stronger role within a group.

Another source of power lies within an individual's governance over desired resources, as well as the ability to reprimand, demote, or eliminate positions and assets. Although the previously mentioned attributes and elements can place an individual in a position of power, the right use of power, by justly serving one's subordinates, is of greater importance. Likewise, what one does in that position of power ultimately affects one's ability to lead and the follower's capacity to follow. Phillips and Bedeian (1994) looked into the exchange quality of leaders and followers, discovering the quality of exchanges between the leader and the follower directly affect the output and productivity of the follower. The followers in the Phillips and Bedeian study were a sample of registered nurses, while the leaders were represented by the nurse supervisors in hospital settings. This study is attention-grabbing, due to the fact that a hospital setting is typically a high stress, emotionally charged environment, where life and death decisions take place on a daily basis. Phillips and Bedeian found that exchanges in which the leader genuinely is learning about the follower, where the leader sincerely is concerned with the follower's development, helped to bring the follower through more challenging situations.

When one has power, how does one make sure that one can use power correctly and ensure a quality environment for followers? The Leader to Leader Institute (2009) exhibited that in order to be a good leader, one must be a good follower. A leader should always remember what it is like to be a follower and never remove themselves completely from that role. Sweeney (2007) showed that compliance based on a leader's position only will work in low risk environments. Moreover, Sweeney and Thompson (2009) discovered that obedience really will only exist due to the leader's ability to deliver rewards and punishments in situations where observation can occur. In order to transcend this basic reward vs punishment motivation, soldiers needed one key characteristic out of their leader, trust. Sweeney (2010) identified the top ten attributes required of a leader in order for soldiers to comply during high risk circumstances. These characteristics are: competence (technical and tactical), loyalty toward the soldiers (placing the welfare of their subordinates over their own), integrity (being able to believe the information from the leader), leading by example (sharing hardships and creating a sense of "we are all in this together"), self-control (to be able to maintain composure in high stress situations), confidence (having the ability to relay sound and timely decisions), courage (having the moral

strength to do the right thing regardless of what this means to a leader's career), communication (followers want to be able to plan and anticipate, preparing for the future, so good information flow is desired), interpersonal skills (followers trust a leader who will make an effort to learn about them as well as understand what their needs are), and a strong sense of duty (followers want to know that their leader is committed to the mission, that they all in).

Observing leadership from the perspective of the follower will only allow a leader to reflect more accurately on how he or she is leading. The Sweeney 2010 study created a template for grading a leader in his or her ability to lead and rank their ability to influence. Through the understanding of the ten characteristics of trust, one can see the importance of developing and evolving within the leader each attribute linked with the establishment of trust from subordinates.

By analyzing information gathered from both the Sweeney (2010) study of US Army soldiers and the research conducted by Phillips and Bedeian (1994) of hospital nurses, a thought-provoking formula can be deduced:

Competence + Caring + Cooperation = Compliance

If the leader is good at what they do, and the leader genuinely has concern for his/her followers, while building a cooperative relationship with his/her followers, the leader will acquire compliance from the group, and therefore obtain a virtuous basis of power.

In my opinion, leadership starts with competence. Regardless of whether you are a leader or a follower, you begin with competence. People respect individuals who are talented at their job, Continual honing of technical and tactical skills is a must. Whether you are a soldier, a nurse, or any professional in between; caring matters. Leaders who are loyal, look out for your interests, and work to improve followers as professionals and human beings, gain trust.

Followers want to be involved. They want input honest feedback. When the individuals work as a team, a great level of interest is encountered by both parties, securing the framework for compliance and giving power to both the leader and the follower through any situation.

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