

LD6-13 El principio del liderazgo compartido

19 de junio de 2006

Estimados suscriptores:

En esta ocasión les envío un fragmento de un artículo titulado "El Principio del Liderazgo Compartido: Creando Líderes en Toda la Organización" publicado por la Association of Research Libraries, que desmiente el estereotipo de que en una organización a unos les corresponde ser líderes y a otros ser seguidores.

El artículo expresa que:

"Ser líderes no es la prerrogativa de unos pocos, ni ser seguidores es la prerrogativa de los muchos. Liderar es guiar el desarrollo del sistema. Seguir es apoyar la causa común.... Liderazgo y apoyo están latentes o activos dependiendo de la naturaleza de la relación entre las personas o entre las personas y su ambiente en el contexto que llamamos 'organización'."

...

"... es importante entender liderazgo y apoyo como relaciones simbióticas. En otras palabras, las personas puede jugar papeles de liderazgo o apoyo dependiendo de la situación y de las necesidades organizacionales."

El artículo se refiere en algunos párrafos a las ventajas de aplicar este principio en la administración de las Bibliotecas de Investigación, pero las ideas que presentan son aplicables a prácticamente cualquier tipo de organización.

Además, si todos los integrantes de la organización pueden ser requeridos para tomar papeles de liderazgo, es buena idea que todos sepan tomar buenas decisiones.

Espero que les sean útiles estas reflexiones.

Con mis mejores deseos.

*Roberto Ley Borrás*

### **The Shared Leadership Principle: Creating Leaders Throughout the Organization**

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#### Introduction

To meet the challenges of the next decade, libraries will increasingly require staff at all levels to have an expanded set of skills and competencies. Few would argue that leadership skills are primary among the necessary and, indeed, critical skills. However, Robert Kelley, Professor at Carnegie Mellon University, argues that for organizations to grow and flourish, another less well known set of skills is also needed. Those skills revolve around the concept of followership.

Robert Kelley defines effective followers as people who:

- \* manage themselves well;

- \* are committed to the organization and to a purpose, principle, or person outside themselves;
- \* build their competence and focus their efforts for maximum impact; and
- \* are courageous, honest, and credible.

### Leadership and Effective Followers

Jill Janov, in her book, *The Inventive Organization*, states that, "Leadership is not the purview of a few nor is followership the purview of the many. To lead is to guide the development of the system. To follow is to pursue the common cause.... Leading and following are dormant or active depending on the nature of relationships between people or between people and their environment in the context we call 'organization.'

"In order to discuss the role of effective followership in an organization, it is important to understand leadership and followership as a symbiotic relationship. In other words, people may play leading or following roles depending on the situation and the organizational needs.

In his ground-breaking book, *The Power of Followership*, Kelley states, "If there is anything the nineties have already taught us, it's that most people are both leaders and followers."<sup>2</sup> Kelley's research shows, however, that most people ascribe negative qualities to the word "follower." Among some of the words used to describe followers, he found "sheep" (the most prevalent response), "yes-people," "apathetic people," and "happy losers." His work investigates the ways in which individuals in follower roles can be effective and powerful contributors to the organization. In other words, people may play leading or following roles depending on the situation and they therefore require the ability to determine which role to take at any given time. Skills that an effective follower possesses include: critical thinking, knowing oneself, and understanding the needs and/or qualities of the people around them. Assessing the situation, an effective follower will decide whether or not to assume a leadership role.

All too often in libraries, people are cast in either follower or leader roles- static positions, frequently to the detriment of the organization's goals and needs. How can this be changed? It can be changed by giving staff the tools needed to be skilled followers and leaders at the same time. With effective training, library staff can become individuals who feel equal to any person taking a leadership role at any given point, individuals committed to the organization's mission and goals, individuals not afraid to participate and to differ constructively.

James Kouzes and Barry Posner, authors of *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose it, Why People Demand It*, believe there is a natural and sometimes overt tension between the leadership role and the followership or what they call the "colleague" role.<sup>3</sup> Their research findings show that, despite distinct differences between expectations of individuals in leadership roles and individuals in followership roles, the characteristic most critical to work relationships is "credibility," or the ability to believe in another.

By developing skillful and credible followers, institutions will by default enhance staff leadership skills. By developing followership skills such as the power of self-reflection and self-management, libraries will create stronger and more perceptive leaders, and a staff that can effectively shift roles as necessary. In addition, building the follower's ability to work alongside others may diminish the competitive urge that is fostered by a view of the leader as superior.

Virginia Vanderslice discusses the importance of separating leadership functions from leadership. She says, "Not only is it possible to fulfill leadership functions without creating static leader roles, but also there may be negative organizational consequences to leader-follower distinctions.... In fact, lodging leadership functions in leaders may actually undermine the very goals leaders are supposed to achieve." Vanderslice, along with Charles Manz, Henry Sims, and others, agrees that power is the line along which we most often draw distinctions between leaders and followers.

As organizations adapt to changing environments and changing user expectations and needs and as they continue their organizational learning process, this delineation along the lines of power loses its meaning. While issues of personal power will always exist, the new view of the cooperative workplace provides an opportunity to reduce individual and collective fixations on power.

Douglas K. Smith writes in consonance with Vanderslice, stating that people in leadership positions (i.e. those with vested higher level authority) also need to be able to consider when and where they might choose to follow rather than lead others. Smith, in the book *The Leader of the Future*, writes, "Top leaders who hope to set the energies and performance of people on fire through rich, promising visions must know when to follow their people's interpretation of those visions in order to truly benefit from the creativity and meaning that any vision-driven enterprise requires."

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