

The Leadership Challenge Overview **Adapted from Kouzes and Posner (2003)**

Five Practices of Exemplary Leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2003)

1. Challenge the Process
2. Inspire a shared vision
3. Enable others to act
4. Model the way
5. Encourage the heart

Challenges the Process

- To search for opportunities
- To experiment and take risks
- To take responsibility for one's actions, both successes and failures.
- Leadership is inherently linked to change, turbulence, conflict, and innovation; to the creation of a new way of life.
- Leaders seek out challenges and challenges seek out leaders; you do NOT always have to initiate change, but be open to new possibilities.
- Leaders must challenge the status quo/tradition – systems may unconsciously conspire to maintain the status quo and/or prevent change; the challenge is not to eliminate any and all traditions, but to ask “why do we do this?” Those few essential traditions that serve the key values of the organization should be emphasized, and those that do not must be reevaluated.
- Challenging the process is NOT:
 - Just playing “Devil’s Advocate”
 - Challenging someone’s beliefs, ideas, or opinions simply because they are different from your own.

Inspire a Shared Vision

- To envision the future
- To enlist the support of others
- Visions in organizational life give focus to human energy and enable others to see more clearly what is ahead of them – it is a leader’s responsibility to give focus to vision; leaders are POSSIBILITY THINKERS!
- Members often have a detailed job description, but lack information about the “big picture” it is the leaders responsibility to fill-in this thinking gap.
- What is VISION? An ideal and unique image of a common or shared future; expresses our highest standards and values.
- Inspiring a shared vision requires identification of constituents, or those individuals that are most essential in bringing your vision to life.
- Effective COMMUNICATION is essential to sharing a vision!

Enable Others to Act

- To foster collaboration
- To strengthen others
- The expectation of future interaction encourages people to cooperate in the present.
- Meaningful member participation has a positive impact on productivity; it is almost never negative or neutral.

- People must have the proper tools before they can act. Thus it is essential that the leader arm members with the knowledge and skills necessary for them to make good judgments; leaders must also keep people informed, develop personal relationships with individual members, involve everyone in important decisions, and acknowledge people for positive contributions.
- When you go out of your way on behalf of others you establish a level of credit/trust that may be useful during times when extraordinary efforts are required.
- When you strengthen others, your level of influence increases.

Model the Way

- To set an example
- To plan small wins – small wins help people to feel committed to a successful cause and encourage ongoing commitment over time.
- You cannot lead others where you would not go yourself!
- In order to set an example, leaders must know and live their values.
- Leaders provide a standard by which other people in the organization may calibrate their own choices and behaviors.
- Positions give authority, but behavior earns respect; consistency between words and actions builds a leader's credibility.
- The process of modeling the way makes the achievement of a leader's vision tangible.

Encourage the Heart

- To recognize contributions and celebrate accomplishments.
- Reward performance that meets and exceeds the articulated standards.
- Recognition helps empower recipients by increasing their visibility.
- Leaders can make other people feel like WINNERS!
- When leaders cheerlead, they base their celebrations on three central principles: focusing on key values, making recognition public, and being personally involved.
- Don't forget to SAY THANK YOU!!!

The above practices are described by Kouzes and Posner (2003) as essential components of extraordinary leadership. Being human beings, however, we each have our strengths and weaknesses. While you may excel in one practice there may be others with which you struggle. Do not fear.... this is why we have TEAMS! Where one team member may be weak another will be strong. In developing a positive and highly effective group dynamic, it is essential to first understand your own strengths and weaknesses and then to understand those of your team members. Through positive communication, active listening, and effective teamwork practices that play on each individual's strengths, your team can achieve great things!