

Ten Characteristics of a Servant-Leader

Listening—Leaders have traditionally been valued for their communication and decision-making skills. These are important skills for the Servant-Leader. These need to be reinforced by a deep commitment to listening intently to others.

Empathy—The Servant-Leader strives to understand and empathize with others. People need to be accepted and recognized for their special and unique spirits. The most successful Servant-Leaders are those who have become skilled empathetic listeners.

Healing—Learning to heal is powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of servant-leadership is the potential for healing oneself and others.

Awareness—General awareness, especially self-awareness, strengthens the Servant-Leader. Awareness also aides one in understanding issues that involve ethics and values.

Persuasion—The Servant-Leader seeks to persuade others, rather than to coerce compliance. This element offers one of the clearest distinctions between the traditional authoritarian model and that of servant-leadership. The Servant-Leader is effective at building consensus within groups.

Conceptualization—Servant-Leaders seek to nurture their abilities to “dream great dreams.” The ability to look at a problem (or an organization) from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities.

Foresight—Foresight is a characteristic that enables the Servant-Leader to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequences of a decision for the future. It is also deeply rooted within the intuitive mind.

Stewardship—This is defined by Peter Block (author of *Stewardship*) as “holding something in trust for another.” Servant-leadership, like stewardship, assumes, first and foremost, a commitment to serving the needs of others. It also emphasizes the use of openness and persuasion rather than control.

Commitment to the Growth of People—Servant-Leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. As such, the Servant-Leader is deeply committed to the growth of each individual within his or her institution.

Building Community—The Servant-Leader senses that much has been lost in recent human history as a result of a trend in which large institutions, rather than local communities, have become the primary shapers of human lives.