

## Sample Interview Paper #1

I interviewed a university professor and an owner of a financial management company in order to determine what qualities make an effective leader. Their responses were consistently alike, though they do not know each other. The professor and business owner share similar characteristics, philosophies, strategies, and principles of effective leadership for diverse populations, but they differ in their views of the role of technology and self-care.

Both leaders have some personal characteristics in common that enable them to naturally lead others. For example, they both speak of being intrinsically motivated. No one has to tell them to try their best. They always commit to seeing a task through for the sense of accomplishment that results. Personal integrity is tied to their motivation to do well. According to the professor, it's the desire for a clear conscience and the ability to sleep at night that motivates her to lead with honesty. More shared traits include responsible, diligent, thoughtful, and efficient. As these leaders take ownership of decisions and take responsibility for the outcomes, they remain trustworthy in the eyes of those they lead.

Being an example is most important, and both leaders embrace the philosophy of being a servant leader. Campuses reflect the values, beliefs, and management and leadership styles of their principals (Reinhartz and Beach, 2004). The leaders I interviewed do not expect their employees or students to do anything that they wouldn't do themselves. Seeing themselves as agents of change rather than managers defines their position and they strive to motivate and serve those they lead while keeping the goal always the top priority. The professor calls this, "Playing the long game." She keeps the long path in mind at all times while leading others.

Many similarities between leadership in business and leadership in education are in the strategies implemented by these two leaders. In education, the professor identifies individual strengths and finds ways to maximize others' talents. Similarly, the business owner observes and communicates with each employee to identify individual skills. This strategy helps her in choosing the right people for the right tasks based on unique strengths. She believes that it doesn't matter who gets the credit as long as the job gets done. This coincides with the professor's desire to bring out the best in her students, allowing them to utilize their abilities as much as possible without a need to be recognized. Her focus is student growth, not accolades for herself. In business, the leader practices what she calls "The invite and challenge." Rather than simply telling her employees what to do, she expresses the need for

help with a project. Collaboration between colleagues is encouraged and then they all share the happy result when the task is complete. In the same way, the university professor brings students into research as assistants practicing experiential learning.

Flexibility is important as she fuses research with teaching collaborating students throughout the project. She implements benchmarks along the way to monitor and evaluate during the learning process. This invitation for the stakeholders (the students; the employees) to share in the research on a university campus or to solve a problem in the workplace fosters a desire to effectively share in the vision of the leader which greatly improves both organizations. Both leaders evaluate those they lead by assessing how much the student or the employee applies what is learned. For the students, this means taking what they learned in class to the world outside of the classroom. For the employees, it means knowing what to do in the workplace and doing it without being told.

Diversity is part of every classroom and every organization because people are diverse and organizations are made up of people. We are uniquely created with different personalities, gifts, passions, and skills. Add to that different backgrounds and experiences, various ethical, moral, political, and religious views. However, in spite of our differences, a group will find common ground no matter how diverse they are if we lead others to embrace common goals. Reinhartz and Beach (2004) found that the inspired commitment to a common cause creates a strong bond among all members of the school, which results in higher academic performance for all students (p. 37). I believe diversity brings value to our schools. We are created differently so that when we work together as a team, we are more complete because on our own we lack the gifts that others bring. This is unity. So it is through our diversity that we are more unified with each individual valued for what they bring to the whole. According to the business leader, identifying and celebrating individual strengths enhances an organization if individuality is treated with respect and if people are assigned tasks that match their unique gifts and strengths. Productivity is maximized. Moral is high. Employees are satisfied. Similarly, the professor acknowledges that students have different skills so she seeks to bring out individual talents and diversifies the evaluation process. This is respectful of those she teaches and promotes learning for all her students.

While both leaders spoke of technology providing more freedom for them to be flexible in their work, they differed in their views of how much to integrate it into their work. According to the professor, "Technology should serve pedagogy and not the other way around." She uses it only if it helps meet the learning goals and objectives that she has set rather than

creating new objectives in order to integrate the latest technology. In contrast, the business leader believes that her employees must change procedures and services as the technology changes. If an employee is not able to adapt, then business is slowed and tasks will unfairly fall frequently to someone who is able, or clients will choose to conduct business elsewhere. Though there are differences in the use of technology for education and business, both leaders acknowledge that it is easier to balance personal life and job responsibility with tremendous freedom due to technology.

With regard to personal health, these leaders practice different habits for mental and physical self-care. The professor believes in what she calls the "lag effect." She is careful not to expect immediate appreciation from her students. Rather, her decisions are guided by an internal compass toward the greater good even if her students do not see it at the time. Instead of becoming discouraged or irritated, she continues on toward the objectives knowing one day her students will appreciate and understand. She does not drink alcohol or caffeine, but vitamin C is essential for her physical health. The business leader starts each day with meditation, prayer and coffee. She exercises regularly with her dogs and enjoys a glass of wine daily. Though their habits are different, both leaders realize that in order to care for and lead others, they have to be proactive in taking healthy care of themselves.

After interviewing two leaders, one in education and one in business, I realize that implementing the right principles and strategies combined with a clear philosophy of servant leadership creates an effective leader. We need to embrace diversity while maintaining unity by working together toward common goals. We need to lead by example.