

Personal Leadership Philosophy

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Leadership is a trait that can be learned based upon many different factors in a person's life. Typically, leadership is determined by the different influences and examples that are set by others, influencing a person towards one style or understanding of leadership over another. Be it a person's parents, teachers or bosses at work, a person's understanding of leadership is crafted mostly by the people and culture around them. This personalized understanding is what leads different people to have different understandings of how leadership should best be conducted, with different people prioritizing different styles based upon their own personally crafted perception of what a leader should look and behave like. This is no different for me, my understanding of leadership and how leaders should go about guiding people was heavily impacted by the people in leadership roles around me, especially when I was younger and more impressionable.

Perhaps the first place, and possibly the most impactful influence where my perception of leadership was crafted was in school. School does have a massive influence on the development of children, both in areas like intelligence, knowledge, social abilities and other aspects. This is also true of a person's perception of leadership, as it is in school that a person truly first sees the signs of leadership in the form of their teachers. Teachers take charge of the classroom of students that they teach, keeping them on track and focused on the assignments and lessons that they are supposed to be doing. The best teachers typically do this through making sure that the students themselves are engaged with the assignments or lessons and not completely bored, as bored students likely won't actually engage with the lessons and learn what they should be learning, while also having a stern enough hand, but not so stern as to make the students resent them. This is a vital aspect of good leadership, as being stern enough to exert control over the people you should be leading while also not being so overbearing as to make them resent you, and thus not wish to listen, is an aspect of leadership that extends to any leadership role.

School undoubtedly was where my perception of leadership was most developed, but that wasn't the only source of such influence. Another important factor in forging my understanding of leadership came in the form of my coaches for both soccer and baseball. When I was younger, I would play both in a soccer and a baseball league, and the coaches would always be the ones to lead the teams towards success. This was typically done through being very supportive of the players, as we were very young and so the stakes weren't high enough yet that the coaches and players were heavily invested in things like how well we were doing in the league. This low stakes sort of environment helped the leadership of the coaches to be more laid back and supportive to the growth of the players over any true end goal, which in turn helped the players develop both in their love and dedication for the game and also in their skill at it. I believe that this leadership example taught me how to support people who are just entering into a new field that they were previously inexperienced in, and how a leader can help guide them to understanding, which will better support that person should they continue to contribute to that field.

Another extremely important manner in which my sense of leadership was crafted is through my first ever job as a front of house worker at the fast food restaurant Cookout. As it was my first ever job, it also was the first time I ever had an actual boss to answer to, and to observe in his actions as a leader. The first general manager I ever had, the one who hired me, was actually a very poor leader, failing to keep the workers in line and also suffering from other failures in leadership, such as the act which got him removed from the company, dating a worker under him and allowing her to get away with increasingly more and more outrageous things. My first general manager, though a failure of a leader, was actually quite useful for my understanding of leadership, as it showed me first hand how a leader can fail, and what I shouldn't do were I ever in his position. Having this experience with poor leadership was problematic at the time as it made my work harder, but the impact his failure had on my perception of leadership was worth the inconvenience.

I have remained at Cookout throughout my college career, even now I continue to work there as I finish out my education, and what this has done is give me experience with a great many different leadership styles. Throughout the years, the general managers come and go quite often, be it because they were assigned to a different location, got a raise, quit working for Cookout entirely or were fired, the general managers at Cookout never seem to last very long. There have been stand outs though, general managers who have been either extremely effective and good leaders, and of course managers whose leadership skills are lacking, managers much like the one who hired me. The second general manager I had, replacing the manager who hired me, has got to be the most effective general manager that has worked at that location while I have been there. He came in and quickly cleaned up the mess left from the previous manager, trained and led the staff to becoming faster and more efficient, hired more workers and overall helped to improve the work environment substantially. Unfortunately, as all general managers, he only lasted a little bit over a year before he quit the position, but his leadership was substantially better than almost any other manager we have had since, and due to that his strict, yet fair leadership style has undoubtedly left an impact on my own understanding of what makes a good leader.

All of these different influences have crafted my understanding of what makes a leader, and specifically what makes a leader effective in that role. A leader must be strong enough to direct those working underneath them, while at the same time not being so harsh as to make the very people they are leading resent them, as if they do then they will be less likely to actually listen to the leader. A leader must also have good self control, as they are the example that others are to follow. If the leader that people are looking towards to guide them lacks self control and discipline then those they lead will likely follow suit, which of course impacts the entire operation, be it fast food service or coaching a sport. This balance of being both stern, yet fair, alongside good self control and discipline is what makes an effective leader, and it is a balance I will strive for when I am put into a leadership position.