



The Leadership Letter January 2014

Leadership Transition: Challenges and Opportunities

For most of the Boards of Directors of SECA, the fall is a time for leadership transition. You may be welcoming a new President-Elect, saying good-bye to a President, embracing a new President. For many of the affiliate leaders, it's a time of change and reflection....where have we been, where are we going and how do we get there?

Each new leader brings their own personal set of skills to the position. The individual's personality may be very different from their predecessor—their work and leadership style poles apart from the previous President—their relationships and communication with Board members yet to be discovered.

The SECA Board knows that these transitions bring both challenge and opportunity to the Board of Directors and we thought it might be helpful to share with you the best thoughts of the experts about "what makes a

great leader."

If you're the new President, a continuing Board member or maybe an "emerging leader," take some time to think about your role and how the information we'll share can help you to develop those outstanding leadership characteristics and qualities.

Many of the characteristics and qualities that the experts list can be developed and learned. Obviously, if you're someone for whom many of these things are innate, it will be easier to enhance them; however, if it's a learning curve for you, don't despair. Developing leadership skills can be a path to enhancing your stature and contribution to your state and local affiliate.

Remember, everything doesn't happen at once....begin your journey at the local level and then commit to service at the state level. **Who knows, you might be the next President of SECA!**

Some Thoughts on Leadership

- ◇ *"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."* John Quincy Adams
- ◇ *"Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others."* Jack Welch
- ◇ *"Leaders aren't born, they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work....."* Vince Lombardi
- ◇ *"A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves."* Lao Tzu

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Ten Qualities of Great Leaders

If you decided to do a literature search, you'd find dozens and dozens of articles, books and reports on "leadership." It's a topic that has fascinated writers and researchers who worked to quantify just what it takes to be a great leader.

From our research, it appears that everyone has reached similar conclusions and we'll outline those qualities and characteristics that many experts have identified as necessary for success in leadership. According to the article, *10 Qualities of Superior Leadership* from www.entrepreneur.com, these are the 10 characteristics that great leaders share.

- 1) **Communicates a Sense of Mission:** For great leaders, there's no question—they know what their mission is. Their mission is well thought-out and articulated clearly and concisely so that everyone (Board, employees, etc.) understand why the organization exists and what it should accomplish.
- 2) **Defines a Clear Vision:** The leader's vision for how to achieve the mission is clear and concise—abstract enough that people can "dream and contribute" but clear enough that it is understandable and provides a blueprint for action.
- 3) **Sets Achievable and Realistic Goals:** A great leader can map out how to move an organization toward that "vision." Goals are achievable, can be measured for success and specific. Everyone understands that these goals will move the organization toward achieving the mission.
- 4) **Demonstrates Competency:** A great leader doesn't have to be an expert in a particular field but needs to understand how to tap the expertise of persons around him/her. The leader who can effectively utilize experts is viewed as both competent and successful. This competency can often be developed as a person moves through different professional opportunities within an organization or field.
- 5) **Develops Leadership Teams:** Strong leaders utilize the expertise of people around them. No one person possesses all the skills necessary to successfully lead an organization.... promoting collegial teams is a mark of a good leader.
- 6) **Communicates Effectively:** Nothing is more detrimental to successful leadership than being unable to communicate your vision and goals effectively. The great leader can articulate and share his vision with organizational stakeholders.
- 7) **Possesses Interpersonal Skills:** If you don't know how to work with other people, your title as "leader" will be only that—a title. Great leaders are approachable and confident in their position, listen thoughtfully, and are respectful of the views of others.
- 8) **Has a "Can Do, Get It Done" Attitude:** Obstacles are always there in any "changes" that a leader undertakes: the great leader acknowledges those challenges and develops ways to address them to move toward a goal. If your Board sees that you're positive, expect to move forward and will negotiate a way to get there, the movement toward the goal will be positive and direct.
- 9) **Is Inspirational:** Nothing brings people on board with a project or issue more quickly than someone who demonstrates leadership and inspiration in the process. People naturally look up to a great leader and that leader's job is to motivate and inspire others to move toward a goal.
- 10) **Commits to Progress:** Meeting one goal doesn't allow a leader to rest...it's just time to address the next challenge. Leaders who are constantly striving to achieve higher goals will easily find themselves in good company with others who wish to see that success.

Remember: "*The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things.*" Ronald Reagan

Source: *10 Qualities of Superior Leaders*, www.entrepreneur.com

These Traits Make a Good Leader

Are you considering a leadership position in your local or state affiliate? Do you see yourself in this list of traits that experts define as necessary for great leadership?

- ◆ **Honesty**—Perhaps one of the most critical of the items we'll list, honesty as a leader can make or break your success. Do you subscribe to the ethical tenets of the field? (SECA has endorsed the *NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct*.) Are you honest, even if it's difficult to be so? As Martin Luther King said, "*The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy.*"
- ◆ **Ability to Delegate**—Great leaders don't do it all themselves...they share the burden with others and expect support and assistance in reaching goals. If your style is to "keep it for yourself", your leadership will be sorely tested. Identify the strengths of your colleagues, capitalize on them and demonstrate your leader-

ship skills. "*Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results.*" George S. Patton, Jr.

- ◆ **Sense of Humor**—Nobody likes to work with someone who can't find the humor in situations. Of course, there will be trying times but, if you can stand back and look at an issue objectively, you may find that humorous aspect that's always there. There's always tomorrow and the opportunity to tackle whatever today's problem may be.
- ◆ **Commitment**—Leaders "get their hands dirty" and jump in the trenches with their colleagues. For true leaders, no task is too small or too menial. Leaders who lead by example will find success in meeting their goals. "*Leadership is not about titles, positions or flowcharts. It is about one life influencing another.*" John C. Maxwell

- ◆ **Confidence**—The confident person is a natural leader. This doesn't mean arrogant...it means confident in your skills and abilities. Good leaders exude a calm and sense that problems can be solved, challenges met.

"Leaders are not, as we are often led to think, people who go along with huge crowds following them. Leaders are people who go their own way without caring, or even looking to see, whether anyone is following them. Leadership qualities are not the qualities that enable people to attract followers, but those that enable them to do without them. They include, at the very least, courage, endurance, patience, humor, flexibility, resourcefulness, stubbornness, a keen sense of reality and the ability to keep a cool and clear head, even when things are going badly. True leaders, in short, do not make people into followers, but into other leaders." John Holt

Source: *Top 10 Qualities that Make a Great Leader*, www.forbes.com

Some Web Resources on Great Leadership

These websites provide articles and information on leadership that you may find useful.

- ⇒ <http://www.forbes.com>
- ⇒ <http://www.sedl.org>
- ⇒ <http://leadership.uoregon.edu>
- ⇒ <http://blogs.hbr.org>

Leadership Resources from SECA

- ⇒ **Leadership Letters** (2006-2013)
http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/leadership_newsletter.php
- ⇒ **Board Training Modules**
http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/leadership_pdf.php#training
- ⇒ **Affiliate/Board Resource Page** (requires login)
www.southernearlychildhood.org/seca_board_login.php



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Young Children and Their Families
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Women or Men?

Since we've devoted this issue of the *Leadership Letter* to the traits of great leaders, we thought you might find this study by the *Harvard Business Review* of interest. Although the study took place in the corporate world, there were some findings in comparing the leadership strengths of men and women that we thought you might find intriguing.

In the corporate world, 67% of leaders are still men. (For our field, that percentage would be reversed. Our field leadership is predominately female.)

The study encompassed 16 leader competencies that the *Harvard Business Review* had developed over 30 years of research. For example, they asked "how good is the leader at taking initiative, de-

veloping others, inspiring and motivating, and pursuing their own development."

They acknowledge that the stereotype is that female leaders excel at "nurturing" competencies. In the four categories tested, women did score better than men. However, those competencies were not the only areas in which women excelled. "More women were rated by their peers, their bosses, their reports and their associates as better overall leaders than their male colleagues...Specifically, at all levels, women were rated higher in fully 12 of the 16 competencies that go into outstanding leadership....And two of the traits where women outscored men to the highest degree—taking initiative and driving for results—have long been thought of as par-

Did You Know?

SECA has a series of nine Board orientation/ training modules that are available on-line on the Leadership page.

The modules include a background paper, a PowerPoint presentation (and questions) for Board training, and information about resources. Two of the modules will be useful in further research on topics in this newsletter.

Module 5A:

The Board of Directors, Structure, Activities

Module 5B:

The Board of Directors, Training, Recruitment

All materials can be downloaded from the website at

<http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/leadership.php>.



The 2013 SECA Board of Directors

ticularly male strengths. As it happened, men outscored women significantly on only one management competence in this survey—the ability to develop a strategic perspective."

If you'd like to see the actual statistics and list of competencies, you can find them on the blog post at the website listed below. Source: *Are Women Better Leaders Than Men?*, Jack Zenger & Joseph Folkman, *Harvard Business Review*, <http://blogs.hbr.org/2012>