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Personal Leadership Philosophy

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Introduction

My leadership philosophy is centered around helping other people recognize their worth, achieve things they never thought possible, and become the best version of themselves. My work with athletes and their families, my experiences as an educator, and my reflections on this program have helped me better understand my purpose and the areas where I need to grow. Through a core values exercise this past year, I established four values, faith, family, integrity, and connectivity which guide me when it comes to building my relationships and making the right decisions. This paper explores who I am, what I believe about leadership and the experiences that have shaped those beliefs. It also examines how Maxwell's Law of the Lid relates to my commitment for personal development and how I plan to implement my philosophy.

Who Am I

When looking at who I am, I look back at the values that are the foundation for me and the purpose of my daily work. Working with athletes, families, and students has shown me how much I believe in helping people see their worth and potential. I want to understand the relationship dynamics, experiences, and barriers that impact them so I can help them grow toward reaching their goals that may have previously been out of their reach.

Working through a core values exercise with the San Antonio Spurs was the first time I dove introspectively to who I am and helped to be very instrumental in developing clarity around my purpose by turning it into something tangible. The core values that I identified (faith, family, integrity, and connectivity) provided an opportunity to think deeper about what inspires and grounds me as well as how those beliefs should influence my behavior. These values now serve

as my North Star. When faced with uncertainty, pressure or competing priorities, they provide me with a reference point to return to and an evaluation tool to determine if I remain on track.

Faith helps me with the ability to approach everything with humility. Family provides me with connections to the people that are most important and allows me to develop appreciation for the support systems available to other people. Integrity holds me accountable to act with honesty, accept responsibility and honor my convictions even when it is difficult. Connection represents my commitment to forming genuine relationships where people feel heard, validated and appreciated. These four values collectively define my mission to help athletes and students find self worth, take control of their growth and development and become the absolute best version of themselves. Ultimately I would like to become a trusted leader/educator that will demonstrate that my actions align with my intentions, therefore I must continue to grow professionally in preparation, communication, confidence and follow through while continuing to rely upon the foundational elements of my purpose that initially led me into this space.

What I Believe

Leadership Through Empowerment

As an empowering leader, I define leadership through supporting individuals to realize their individual capabilities, to increase their self confidence and trust in making decisions to move forward. As such, my role will include listening to the issues, asking thought provoking questions, providing constructive criticism and connecting individuals with additional resources available to further assist them achieve their desired outcomes. The Law of Empowerment according to Maxwell states "only secure leaders give power to others" (Maxwell, 2011). I find this statement very compelling. It makes me think of becoming confident in my leadership

abilities in order to allow others to participate in contributing, to make decisions and to advance their own personal growth. Additionally, I would like the individuals I am working with to have increased confidence in themselves as well as take ownership of their advancements. Accountability is a significant aspect of empowerment. While encouragement is important for motivating someone to reach his/her goals, it is just as important to assist the individual in recognizing when their actions are contrary to reaching their goals. Honest conversation can convey caring for someone while maintaining respect and genuine interest in the persons' personal growth.

Growth and the Law of the Lid

Another core belief in my leadership philosophy comes from John Maxwell's 'Law of the Lid', a concept in his book The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership. According to Maxwell, "leadership ability is the lid that determines a person's level of effectiveness" (Maxwell, 2013, para. 1). For me, this translates into understanding that if I continue to develop myself then I will be able to more effectively assist others. In short, developing my own leadership abilities allows me to help others develop theirs and the more I know and grow is how far I can lead others.

In addition, I feel that increasing my leadership ability (raising the lid) will involve identifying areas where I lack sufficient skill that limits my potential effectiveness. I believe that there are several key elements required for effective leadership including planning and preparation, communicating clearly and appropriately, exercising good judgment and acting confidently. If I fail to improve these areas, I fear that I will limit my ability to put my intended plans into action. One way that I intend to maintain a growth mindset is by continuing to seek out experiences and input from others. This will include accepting constructive criticism from

others, stepping outside my comfort zone and attempting things which cause discomfort, learning from individuals with differing viewpoints and accepting responsibility for completing tasks requiring new skills. In many cases, experiencing discomfort related to learning and/or growing enables me to acknowledge the areas where I need to improve. Additionally, I hope that my professional development will be enhanced by my experiences. I believe that sharing lessons learned from difficult situations, choices made and errors corrected will enhance the quality of my leadership.

Values, Flexibility, Support

Finally, integrity will always be at the forefront of all aspects of my leadership. Never should professional advancement, winning or protecting an organizations' image justify dishonestly or ignoring harm. Faith and family will also guide my evaluation of opportunities and responsibilities. However, I do not view my methods as unchangeable. Depending upon the individual or circumstance, my methods may change. For example, how I communicate, organize programs or respond to obstacles may change. However, being flexible does not mean compromising on values. I desire to show commitment to my values without showing inflexibility to new ideas.

Why I Believe What I Believe

Empowerment in Practice

In the last year I assisted a family member of one of the athletes I was working with. He was going through some tough times because he felt like he was outside of the athlete's support system. We talked several times during which I helped him to realize that his worth and value

had nothing to do with the struggles he was experiencing. Those experiences were just a small part of his life and he needed to keep things in context. While I couldn't solve all of his problems, I could assist him to find out what was left for him to control. What I mean by this is how he chose to react, what he decided to do next, etc. Helping him to regain his perspective on where he was headed in life was a significant part of what I believed about empowering others. Also, assisting him provided insight into other aspects of my role as a supporter of athletes. While the focus should always be on the athletes, there are people (family members) connected to the athletes that are going through their own struggles and helping them feel valued may be another very positive aspect of my job.

Learning Through the Doctoral Program

Through this program I learned so much more about myself and my shortcomings. The program forced me to analyze the differences between how I intended to provide leadership and how others perceived my leadership. Studying theories related to leadership also helped me to appreciate that decisions we make are influenced by beliefs, assumptions and organizational dynamics that require more attention. Additionally, traveling abroad with groups of sports professionals, meeting new people in different organizations and meeting leaders of different ages and at various levels of their career paths allowed me to broaden my knowledge of the many ways individuals contribute to the overall success of a team. Also, on overseas trips I felt myself being one of the youngest at times and it made me reluctant to speak up with other experienced professionals in the room. But over time I learned that my experiences are still valuable and that I can still be a confident leader/professional in a room full of individuals with more experience than me. Regardless, all perspectives can be valuable. Simply stated, I don’t necessarily need to be the most senior person in order to add value.

Ethical Leadership and Self Awareness

My evaluation of Scoreboard Baby taught me to consider how pressures to succeed (winning), protecting an organization and making decisions under those conditions can impede ethics based decision making. My review of that assignment further solidified my perception of what leadership is. Leaders are responsible/accountable and concerned about the development of others. Additionally, my review of that assignment helped me to be more aware of the importance of questioning decisions based upon my values even though challenging those decisions can be uncomfortable.

Feedback from my fellow classmates has also given me much food for thought regarding my communication skills and professionalism. For example, while humor is a large part of my personality and can help establish relationships, I know that sarcasm can create confusion or cause people to wonder if I'm serious. What I intend doesn't eliminate the effect my words have on others and this has leaked into my daily work life in some ways. Therefore, as I continue to grow as a leader, I intend to be more thoughtful about whether using humor builds relationships or creates a distraction from issues that demand attention, directness or sensitivity. As well as being seen as accessible, being reliable is a key component of the type of leader I wish to become.

Putting My Philosophy Into Practice

For now, my primary areas for personal growth are planning, communication, self confidence and professional presence. As a result of balancing multiple responsibilities like work, school, friends/relationships and personal commitments, I've found weaknesses in managing competing demands. Specifically, there have been times when I could have

communicated sooner with classmates/professors regarding obstacles but didn't. Therefore, I accept responsibility for changing that behavior.

To Put My Philosophy Into Action, I will:

- Plan ahead each week by reviewing my calendar and deadlines to prioritize tasks before rushing sets in.
- Communicate proactively when I suspect delays or need support.
- Regularly seek input from trusted peers regarding my communication/reliability/tone.
- Take advantage of opportunities that challenge me and reflect upon what those experiences teach me.

I will look to assess my overall growth through follow through, earlier communication and feedback from others close to me. These actions give me a way to raise my leadership lid while still maintaining the values that make me who I am. Over time as I develop more as a professional, I want to model the growth I encourage in my athletes and students. Faith, family, integrity and connectivity will continue to be my north star as I navigate my leadership journey. My commitment is to empower others, while continuing to learn, act with integrity and take responsibility for becoming a more effective leader.

References

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