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Book Review *Insights on Leadership*

by

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Book Review

Insights on Leadership

Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990) spent 40 years at AT&T in management research, development, and education. He followed this with another 25 years as a consultant and educator with major corporations, foundations, and educational institutions. Describing himself as a “lifelong student of how things get done in organizations,” Greenleaf’s influence upon management thinking is well documented.

In 1964, he founded the Center for Applied Ethics (now The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership), and in 1970, he wrote an essay, “The Servant as Leader,”¹ which has inspired a generation of individuals and institutions to actively address organizational change from the basis of personal service. As an introduction to servant-leadership, I recommend the recent release, *Insights on Leadership*, edited by the Greenleaf Center Executive Director, Larry Spears.

What is servant-leadership? In his original essay, Greenleaf wrote: “It [servant-leadership] begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.” In the current book, Larry Spears defines servant-leadership as “. . . a long-term, transformational approach to life and work—in essence, a way of being. . . .” Spears also identifies 10 characteristics of the servant-leader: listening; empathy; healing; awareness; persuasion; conceptualization; foresight; stewardship; commitment to the growth of people; and building community.

I can hear symphony organization participants muttering: “Who needs another philosophy? We need bottoms in seats!” True. But if we start and end there, we have not addressed the structural issues most symphony organizations face. We must change the way we all relate to one another in symphony organizations in order to serve the long-term needs of our art form and our audiences. We need help doing this. Where can we turn?

“There are 30 essays covering 4 topics: service, stewardship, spirit, and servant-leadership. Contributors include some of the foremost organizational change practitioners and consultants in America.”

Start with this book, and read it with a highlighter. Read it in parts; return to it regularly. There are 30 essays covering 4 topics: service, stewardship, spirit, and servant-leadership. Contributors include some of the foremost organizational change practitioners and consultants in America. In the book's foreword, Stephen Covey writes: "If you really want to get servant-leadership, then you've got to . . . foster trust through individual character and competence at the personal level." Covey's foreword alone is worth the price of the book.

Joe Batten, author of *Tough-Minded Management*, and the man who gave the U.S. Army "Be All You Can Be," provides a manifesto of values for servant-leaders. His essay includes a 37-point action plan which he precedes with the statement: "The very essence of living passionately is change. Life without change would soon result in death. Change is something to embrace, to invite, to zestfully seek." That was just a warm-up! Contrasting with Batten's holistic, drill-sergeant approach is a scholarly survey by Lawrence Lad and David Lauechauer of the variety of pathways to servant-leadership—representative authors, major themes, and action/response approaches. Lad and Lauechauer establish that the Greenleaf philosophy manifests itself in many unique ways.

To anyone who has scratched the surface of organizational change writing over the last decade, names such as James Autry, Margaret Wheatly, Ken Blanchard, Peter Block, and Joseph Jaworski are familiar ones. All have contributed essays to the book. All apply Greenleaf principles in individual and effective ways. All bear witness to the importance of a basic personal philosophy put into practice.

In this book are testaments to the application of the Greenleaf principles by practitioners in many sectors. For example, Ken Melrose, chairman and CEO of The Toro Company walks us through the process from philosophy to success in a Fortune 500 company. Can a "bottom-line" company get everyone to participate fully in the leadership process? Yes. Melrose gives us a corporate and personal action plan in his essay which has many parallels for symphony organizations.

Ideas which we as musicians, staff members, and volunteers can use today for personal and organizational growth pour out of this book. Jack Lowe Jr, CEO of TDIndustries, a 300-million-dollar mechanical construction company, titled his essay "Trust: The Invaluable Asset." He portrays his company's 30-year experience with servant-leadership right down to detail performance graphs. He closes his essay with: "Trustworthiness, which requires character and competence, can only flourish with leadership that trusts, supports, and encourages. At TD, we call that servant-leadership."

Note

¹ Greenleaf, Robert K. 1970. *The Servant as Leader*. Indianapolis: The Robert Greenleaf Center.

Insights on Leadership

Larry C. Spears, Editor

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