

# Servant Leadership

## What is Servant Leadership?

adapted from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Servant leadership is an approach to [leadership development](#), coined and defined by [Robert Greenleaf](#). Servant-leadership emphasizes the leader's role as *steward* of the resources (human, financial and otherwise) provided by the [organization](#) or group. It encourages leaders to serve others while staying focused on achieving results in line with the organization's values and integrity.

The modern concept of Servant Leadership started with Robert Greenleaf, who published his essay, "The Servant as Leader" in 1970. This led to further essays from Greenleaf, and further works from others, especially in recent years. However, the concept is thousands of years older than this and stems, at least partly, from [Jesus'](#) teachings on leadership. He sought to teach his [disciples](#) that in order to be first they must "wash each other's feet" (Jn. 13:14). In other words, they must seek to serve each other in order to be true leaders. And again, Jesus said that "many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first" (Matt. 19:30), meaning that true leadership, according to Jesus, was leadership based in servanthood.

It differs from other leadership approaches by eschewing the common top-down [hierarchical](#) style, and instead emphasizing [collaboration](#), trust, empathy, and the ethical use of power. At heart, the individual is a servant first, making the conscious decision to lead; his drive is to lead because he wants to serve better, not because he desires increased power. The objective is to enhance the growth of individuals in the organization and increase teamwork and personal involvement.

# 10 Principles of Servant Leadership

From Hampton House  
Butler University

## 1. Listening

Traditionally, leaders have been valued for their communication and decision making skills. Servant-leaders must reinforce these important skills by making a deep commitment to listening intently to others. Servant-leaders seek to identify and clarify the will of a group. They seek to listen receptively to what is being said (and not said). Listening also encompasses getting in touch with one's inner voice, and seeking to understand what one's body, spirit, and mind are communicating.

## 2. Empathy

Servant-leaders strive to understand and empathize with others. People need to be accepted and recognized for their special and unique spirit. One must assume the good intentions of coworkers and not reject them as people, even when forced to reject their behavior or performance.

## 3. Healing

Learning to heal is a powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of servant-leadership is the potential for healing one's self and others. In *"The Servant as Leader"*, Greenleaf writes, "There is something subtle communicated to one who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between the servant-leader and led is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something that they have."

## 4. Awareness

General awareness, and especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant-leader. Making a commitment to foster awareness can be scary--one never knows that one may discover! As Greenleaf observed, "Awareness is not a giver of solace - it's just the opposite. It disturbs. They are not seekers of solace. They have their own inner security."

## 5. Persuasion

Servant-leaders rely on persuasion, rather than positional authority in making decisions. Servant-leaders seek to convince others, rather than coerce compliance. This particular element offers one of the clearest distinctions between the traditional authoritarian model and that of servant-leadership. The servant-leader is effective at building consensus within groups.

## **6. Conceptualization**

Servant-leaders seek to nurture their abilities to "dream great dreams." The ability to look at a problem (or an organization) from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities. Servant-leaders must seek a delicate balance between conceptualization and day-to-day focus.

## **7. Foresight**

Foresight is a characteristic that enables servant-leaders to understand lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision in the future. It is deeply rooted in the intuitive mind.

## **8. Stewardship**

Robert Greenleaf's view of all institutions was one in which CEO's, staff, directors, and trustees all play significance roles in holding their institutions in trust for the great good of society.

## **9. Commitment to the Growth of People**

Servant-leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. As such, Servant-leaders are deeply committed to a personal, professional, and spiritual growth of each and every individual within the organization.

## **10. Building Community**

Servant-leaders are aware that the shift from local communities to large institutions as the primary shaper of human lives has changed our perceptions and caused a sense of loss. Servant-leaders seek to identify a means for building community among those who work within a given institution.