

Could compassion and collaboration be key to effective leadership?

By Jessica Walter, APR, DDC Command Affairs

Could traits like compassion, collaboration, empathy, and commitment to personal growth really be fundamental characteristics necessary for leaders to cultivate highly productive employees?

According to Defense Distribution Center Transformation Office Chief Kevin Cummings and Defense Distribution Depot Richmond, Va., Director Jerri Taylor, the answer may be yes.

“As we all know, a leader is only as good as those under them who are really doing the job,” said Taylor.

A relatively recent leadership style called servant leadership aims to enhance employee performance by emphasizing collaboration, compassion, encouragement, mentoring, listening, trust, development and the ethical use of power and empowerment.

Many say this emerging leadership philosophy has been the cornerstone to increasing employee job satisfaction across the county. According to the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, servant leadership methods have been adopted at many organizations that have also earned a spot on Fortune magazine’s “100 Best Companies to Work for” list.

“The team-building, personal involvement and caring behavior exhibited by supervisors who adopt this leadership philosophy nurture a more cohesive, trusting, motivated, and productive team,” said Taylor. “And it ultimately results in increased job satisfaction – for both supervisors and the employees.”

In 2004, the editors of the DDC Review polled employees to find out what they considered the most important qualities of a good leader. The top responses were communication, interpersonal skills,

completing the mission, integrity, and employee appreciation – all characteristics of servant leaders.

According to Cummings, the servant leadership style is also important to the success of DDC’s Lean program that is being implemented at select DDC sites. “In the Lean culture, our focus is on continuous process improvement, and servant leadership is a key component of Lean leaders because it emphasizes a commitment to employee growth,” explained Cummings.

He cautions, however, that one must be careful not to underestimate the necessary steps to transition to servant leadership. “Without a strong understanding of roles and responsibilities and comprehensive knowledge of the work, a leader cannot effectively teach, mentor and develop employees,” said Cummings.

Critics dismiss servant leadership as a contradiction, arguing that leaders who serve employees cannot also adequately serve the organization’s mission.

Taylor disagrees. “I believe servant leadership causes a leader to really contemplate who their ‘customers’ actually are, for the true customers of any leader are those they lead.”

Taylor’s use of the servant leadership style has resulted in the dramatic improvement of DDRV’s climate/culture survey results during her tenure. Since 2003, DDRV’s scores have improved by 128 percent and the number of employees completing the survey has increased from 21 to 132 (almost every employee).

A key to DDRV’s success, according to Taylor, is encouraging the servant leadership style from the top down so it reaches supervisors at

What is the secret to great teamwork?

As part of DDC’s continuing focus on improving climate and culture across the organization, the staff of the DDC Review asked employees for the secrets to great teamwork. Here is what our employees had to say.

If you would like to submit a response to our question, visit the DDC Review page on the DDC website at www.ddc.dla.mil/library/review/feedback.aspx. Responses will be posted to DLA Today & Tomorrow and will be published in the DDC Review. Anonymous responses are ok.

Integrity is one of the secrets in my opinion. You have to have team members with the integrity to do the right thing at the right time, even when no one else is looking. These are the people who are committed to the mission.

*Don Wood, DDCT
Distribution Process Worker*

Mutual respect for each others abilities.

*Becky Pattishall, DDWG
Quality Assurance Examiner*

I believe the secret to great teamwork is all employees being focused on achieving the same goal.

*Nance Rice, DDTP
Transportation Assistant*

Communication, camaraderie and a good sense of humor.

*Violet Fischer, DDPW
Management Analyst*

The secret to great teamwork is communication and respect.

*Vanessa Gamble, DDAA
Administrative Assistant*

T=Trust
E=Expertise
A=Analyze
M=Motivation
W=Weaknesses (all strengths and no weakness=unrealistic)
O=Oral Communication
R=Reliable
K=Kinship

Azalea Wise, DDCN

All things are possible through unity. Through interaction we build on each others strengths, diverse backgrounds and skills to exceed the challenges and expectations laid upon us.

*Robert Collins, DDWG
Support Services Specialist*

The secret to great teamwork is respect for others, possibility thinking, maintaining momentum, possessing an accommodating attitude for team diversity and enthusiasm of what must be done.

*Corrine Jacox, DDWG
Accountable Officer*

The secret to great teamwork is the ability of a group of individuals to effectively tackle any task assigned to the team by communicating, sharing knowledge, finding resolution to issues, and taking corrective actions to ensure cohesion within the organization and ultimately establishing a safe and effective working environment.

*Macy Cruz, DDGM
Accountable Officer*

There are several things that go hand and hand in order to accomplish great teamwork. Some of the key features are communication, respect for others, good work ethics, all working together to achieve the same goal.

*LaToya Smith, DDAA
Material Examiner & Identifier Leader*

every level of the organization. “It takes the entire management team to create a community focused on people and mission.”

Demonstrating her commitment to ensuring the welfare of her workforce, Taylor recently held a stress management workshop in which employees learned the causes of and cures for stress. She considers stress management to be a very appropriate training topic as DDRV enters an A-76 re-competition that will decide if the mission work performed at DDRV will continue to be performed by government employees or if a private sector business can do the work at a lower cost.

“At DDRV, we are concerned about our employees. We do care about them, not just the mission alone,” Taylor added.

Robert Greenleaf is widely regarded as the father of servant leadership, but similar teachings have also appeared in leadership development books penned by Stephen Covey (*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*), Ken Blanchard (*One Minute Manager*), Peter Senge (*The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*) and others.

Keys to Cultivating Servant Leadership and Bringing Out the Best in Your Employees

- Listen to employees
- Include employees in the decision-making process
- Act as a good steward of resources (employees, time and funds)
- Use power ethically
- Be empathetic
- Collaborate with employees
- Create environment of trust
- Be understanding of mistakes
- Work with employees to strengthen weaknesses
- Promote personal growth of employees
- Build a sense of community
- Empower your employees
- Encourage creativity and new ideas



Leadership

includes developing employees,

motivating your team, and

providing *direction*