

## LEADERSHIP AND ME: AM I UP TO THE JOB?

Last year, our District Leadership School focused on Club Presidents and other club officers. This year the District Governor has asked me to emphasize leadership for all District officers.

If you've watched the recent Winter Olympics, you've come to know Milt Romney. By all accounts he showed superb leadership. He stepped in at a time of scandal and dwindling funds. Yet he made these Olympics into probably the best ever. He really showcased American leadership.

Allow me to begin by congratulating you. By virtue of your position you are in fact designated as Lion leaders. You may be a Deputy Governor, a District Committee Chair, a Zone Chair, a Club Officer, or a Club Committee Chair. Regardless of position, you are now expected to be a leader.

Yet just who is a leader? More importantly, do you have the right stuff to be a leader? In effect, you are being asked whether or not you are up to the job. That is what we will be talking about during the next hour or so.

Primarily we will be focusing on the skills that are needed to be an effective Lion leader. At the end we will also say a little about your role in your new job. We are fortunate in that these essential skills have been long recognized as necessary to all leaders. In fact they are a product of years of experience and observation by professionals.

Let me begin by asking, "What is leadership?" In its most basic sense, leadership is nothing more than directing others down the road you want them to take. Or, to put it even more simply, it's getting people to do what you want them to do—successfully I might add. Why? Who remembers an unsuccessful leader? This all may be a rather simple explanation, but I'm sure we all recognize that there is a lot more to it than that. For example, simply being a District officer does not mean that you will be successful in leading other Lions toward a particular goal.

Leadership generates a lot of discussion. You've often heard the statement that leaders are made, not born. One thing that the experts do agree on though is that there are several traits that leaders hold in common. That is where I wish to begin my discussion of leadership.

As we discuss these traits, you can also use them as a silent checklist for yourself. You can ask yourself, "Do I have these traits?" If you do, "Great!" You are well on your way to being a Lion leader. If you are missing some of these traits, then allow me to suggest that you put some emphasis on improving them for yourself between now and when you take office on July 1.

## TO BE A LION LEADER, I MUST

. . . **first and foremost have integrity.** Integrity is the moral compass that guides you to do what is right. It is the sum of your moral principles by which you live. Like no other leadership trait, this is a pass/fail issue. With it, you will be trusted. Without it, you cannot be a Lion leader or have the respect of other Lions. By way of illustration, let me tell you about a real incident in a Lion's Club that could be faced by any one of you. (Tell them about the District convention funding issue.) You must live by the Lions Code of Ethics and the International Objects.

. . . **be courageous.** This does not refer to the courage of heroes such as Todd Beamer from Flight 93 on September 11. By now we all know his story. He organized a group to rush the terrorists on that ill-fated plane and told his wife what he planned to do. The last thing she heard him say was, "Let's roll!" You, on the other hand, may be expected to display moral courage, even in a Lions setting. (Tell them about the District convention funding issue where the President had to tell a PDG and two members that the Club didn't have the money to pay their way to the convention. He did the morally courageous thing, but he also endured the verbal displeasure of the PDG—which was totally inappropriate on his part.)

. . . **excel in all that I do for my District.** Coming in second or third, so to speak, is just that—second or third place. First place belongs to those Lion leaders who meet or exceed their goals. To them, challenges become opportunities, and Lion leaders are determined to make their District or Club better for it. Anything less is not an option—if you expect to excel.

. . . **be responsible and decisive.** Regardless of the position you are now in, remember this. You willingly accepted or sought it. Now you own it. Take charge of it, know what your job entails, and see it through. Make the necessary decisions intelligently and promptly. Don't alibi; just do your job well. Anything less lets down the Lions of District 13J and your District Governor.

. . . **build a team.** This, of course, assumes that you have some Lions reporting to you. No Lion leader is an island unto himself or herself. Effective leaders delegate and know how to put together a winning team. They also stand out as people oriented leaders who work well with everyone. (I will say more about team building later in the presentation.)

. . . **be innovative.** We've all heard the challenge to "think outside of the box" and "push the envelope." Those are terms that describe Lion leaders who look for new ways to meet the opportunities facing Lionism today—e.g. a declining membership (25 years ago District 13 J had 2500 Lions. Had it not been for women, we might have been out of business by now!), a loss of clubs, entrenched conservatism, and a lack of interest by younger men and women in our communities. Showing creativity is no easy task. You will have to look for solutions that have not been tried before.

. . . **set a good example.** Leadership by example may be one of the most important of the leadership traits. Why? Because it is universally accepted that as the leadership does, so goes the organization. Set a good example, and you will be respected and trusted. Set a bad example, and you will be ignored.

. . . **be persistent.** As a Lion leader, you will have to work harder than anyone else. That simply goes with the territory. Giving a 110% effort probably should be changed to 150%. At least that's what seems to be required nowadays in any job. You will also have to work smarter. That means you have to know your job especially well. You have to know the policies and procedures of Lionism at the International, State, District, and Club level. You have to know parliamentary procedures. And you probably will have to know how to keep the books properly and use a budget.

. . . **give more than I receive.** This seems so elementary in Lionism that you might wonder why I have to mention it. However, sometimes "service before self" gets lost as one advances up the ladder into leadership positions. If you seek out these positions for their power and prestige or how they look on your resume, then you are not the Lion leader that we want. Keep in mind that when you report to St. Peter at the pearly gates, he won't ask you what positions you held. He will ask you what you did to help others. That is what will count most in life.

. . . **be enthusiastic.** Like the Energizer bunny, you have to have more energy than others. This is both physical and mental energy, but they are important. Enthusiasm is contagious.

. . . **remain humble.** As you advance in Lionism, it is very easy to become imperial. The higher you go, the higher the esteem for the position and you. But you can lose it very easily by allowing yourself to be enamored by the job and take on the trappings of the office. (Tell the story about the BG on the hot summer day.) Always remember, that you are still a Lion like everyone else, and after your term of office ends, you will go back to being a Lion like everyone else.

. . . **be fair to all.** You may think that this is not necessarily an issue for leaders. But it is a very important one. There are cliques everywhere, even in Lionism. There are parties who will try to pull you one way or the other on issues. There are folks who will try to make their agenda your agenda. Bear in mind that the rank and file are always watching to see how you handle issues and situations. If they perceive you to be partial or unfair, your ability to succeed will be seriously impaired.

. . . **speak effectively and plainly.** This is a biggie! If you expect to get your message through, to sell other Lions on your ideas, and to be seen as a confident leader, you must be able to do this well. You do not have to be a great orator. However, you must be able to get up in front of a group and give a presentation. Don't get tangled up in powerful words and long sentences. Too many so-called professions today adopt a language all their own. All they succeed in doing is making it more difficult for people to understand what it is they are saying and put their audience to sleep. The media and intellectual elite criticize President Bush for his way with words. But nobody misunderstands his message.

. . . **be focused.** This trait is probably right up there with integrity and courage in importance. You can possess all of the other traits. However, if you cannot set goals and objectives, establish priorities, manage your time well, and be organized, you are going to have a really, really tough time being a Lion leader.

## **Four Leadership Styles**

**The Director:** Provides specific instructions (roles and goals) for the team and closely supervises task accomplishment.

**The Coach:** Explains decisions and solicits suggestions from the team but continues to direct task accomplishment.

**The Supporter:** Makes decisions together with the team and supports their efforts toward task accomplishment.

**The Delegator:** Lets the team make the decisions and have responsibility for implementation and task accomplishment.

**The challenge is to know how you behave as a leader and when to use the appropriate style of leadership.**

**That will be determined by the situation. Or more precisely, you will need to know:**

The nature of the task or project.

The amount of time needed to accomplish it.

The importance of it.

The motivation and abilities of the team members.

The style of leadership that the team expects.

## Team Building

Some thoughts on team building:

There is no "I" in TEAM.

Remember that you are working with living, breathing Lions who have feelings, needs, and dignity.

As a Lion leader, you will be providing direction, organization, and resources to the team members. In doing so, two of your primary goals will be to involve everyone and build fellowship.

Most of all, team members want to be useful and needed.

## Effective Team Builders

**. . . choose the right style of leadership for the situation.**

**. . . seek everyone's input when setting goals.** Start with the District Governor first. Then give everyone on your team a chance to have a say. Doing so spreads the ownership around for the goals that are finally adopted. It also makes the team members stakeholders in achieving those goals.

**. . . support the team members.** Provide the tools they need to achieve the goals.

**. . . give credit where due.** Praise in public, criticize in private still works nicely. (Refer to UW card of thanks.)

**. . . keep their word.** When you make a promise, you make a contract. Break your word, and you break the contract. Once that happens, the team members will no longer trust you.

**. . . communicate.** Communication is a two-way street on a team. There has to be both upward and downward communication between the leader and the team members. Allow me to suggest that there is a time and place too for e-mail communications. You cannot sit behind a computer sending out e-mails as a way of communicating with your team. Unfortunately, I've seen division heads and vice-presidents do exactly that. When you can go for months and have no face-to-face contact with the leader, something is not right.

. . . **follow through.** In tandem with communication, good team leaders follow through to see how the team is progressing toward goals and milestones. The easiest way to fail as a leader is to fail to monitor the progress of a team.

. . . **are professional.** Lastly, be tactful in your dealings with people. Treat everyone with respect, and live by the Golden Rule. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, and you'll be just fine.

## The Job

Let's talk a moment now about your job for the coming Lions year. Some of you will have positions at the Club level, others at the Zone or District level, and still others at the State level. Regardless of your position, you will probably begin with this question in mind.

**What do I want to do this year?** Increase membership? Increase donations? Start a new Lions Club? This will determine the road down which you will travel. If you don't care where you are going, any road will get you there.

**Whatever you want to do**, be reasonably certain that it's achievable. Seek the advice and support of others—the DG, PDG's, past presidents, Club members (new and old), and community leaders. Once you decide upon your goals and objectives, get them endorsed by the appropriate authority—the DG, your chairperson, or your Board of Directors. Lastly, share your goals with everyone and keep them out there in the forefront all year long.

**Once your goals are in place**, develop your plan to achieve the goals. That may include selecting key people to help lead the effort, laying out a calendar, developing a budget, and seeking the necessary Lions or community resources. Use those Lions manuals and job descriptions!

**Throughout the year**, you will need to always plan ahead—at least 2-3 months depending upon the goal. You will also need to manage, but don't micro-manage. Delegate effectively and use those committees you may have set up. Choose the right leadership style, keep everyone on target and informed, and follow-through.

## **Conclusion**

**There are those who make things happen. There are those who watch things happen. And there are those who wonder what happened. Which will you be? Will you be seen as the “weakest link” or the Lion leader who makes things happen? You may believe that you have a choice, but you really don’t. For the future of Lionism, there is only one choice. You must be a Lion leader who makes things happen.**

In closing, let me summarize with these thoughts:

Take charge and be a Lion leader.

Decide what you want to do.

Develop your plan to get there.

Stay on target.

Communicate, communicate, communicate.

Give credit to others.

**Have a good time!**