
Servant Leadership in Sport: A Concept Whose Time has Arrived

Jon Hammermeister, Ph.D.

Nicole Baldwin, M.S.

Matt Chase, Ph.D.

Eastern Washington University

Kirk Westre, Ph.D. Whitworth College

Servant Leadership

- Relatively “New” Paradigm of Leadership (Greenleaf, 1977)
 - Roots are biblical
 - Application strongly entrenched in secular world
 - Concept has gained popularity in business settings
 - Southwest Airlines
 - The Toro Co.
 - AT&T
 - Gulf Oil
 - Nordstrom's
 - Many others....
 - Servant Leaders are:
 - “leaders who put other peoples’ needs, aspirations, and interests above their own”
 - “leaders who make a deliberate choice to serve others”
 - “leaders whose primary goal is to serve first, as opposed to leading”
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Leadership Pyramid

- **Transactional Leaders**
 - Lowest level of sophistication
 - Reliance on “transactions” and policies to motivate
 - Least effective style for enhancing productivity with modern day athletes
 - However, IQ and maturity mediate productivity equation
 - Most coaches begin as transactional leaders
 - Some remain there
 - Often referred to as “old school”



- **Mid-Level Transactional Leaders**

- Beginning to develop more sophisticated skills
 - Experiments with different coach behaviors
- Still relies mainly on “transactions”

Leadership Pyramid

■ Transformational Leaders

- Rely on intelligence, personality, charisma to inspire and lead
- “Transformation” away from fear-based transactions and towards hi achievement
- Athletes treated fairly, but differently
 - Understands the role of transactions
 - Uses when necessary
- Team members “want to win” for their leader
- Able to “transform” losing teams into winning ones

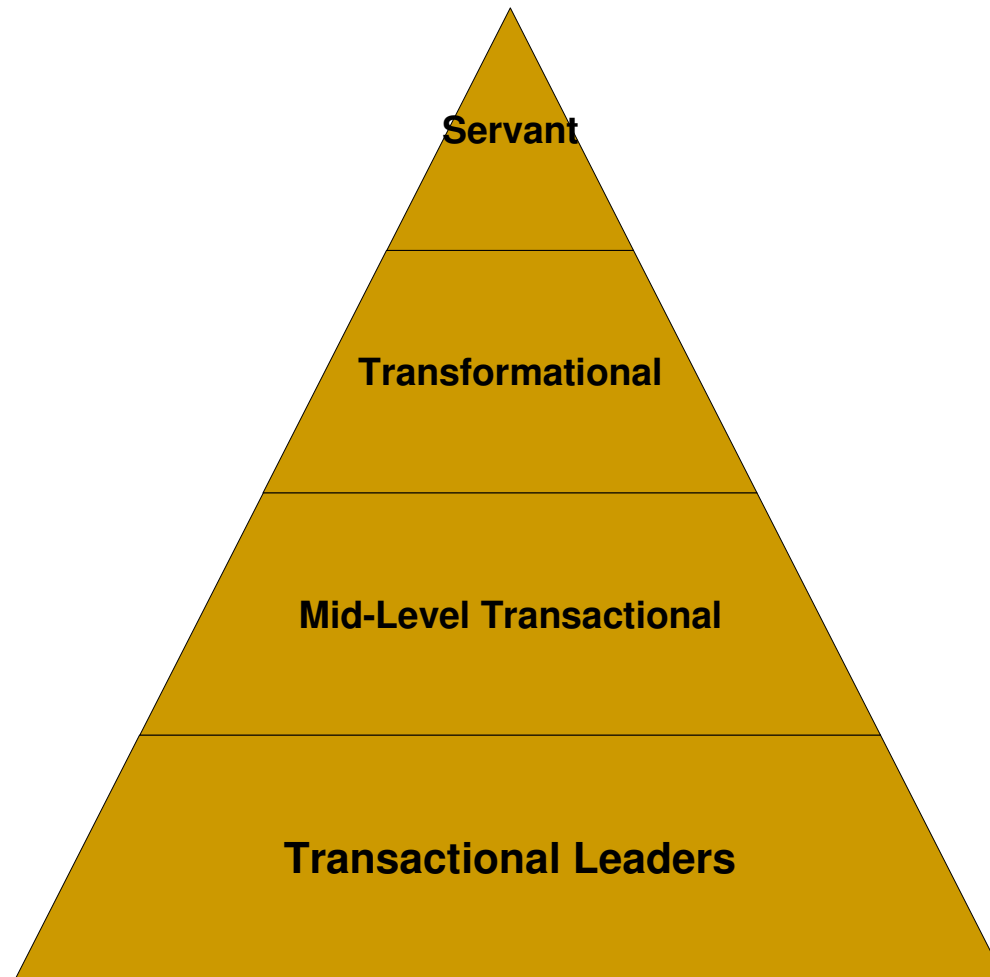


Leadership Pyramid

- **Servant Leaders**
 - Use techniques from all other levels
 - One major difference:
 - Primary interest and motivation is for success of others



Leadership Pyramid



Characteristics of Servant Leaders

- Empowering and developing others
 - Humility
 - Serving Others
 - Participatory leadership
 - Inspiring leadership
 - Visionary leadership
 - Courageous leadership
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Servant Leader Research

- Paucity of research – probably due to newness of the construct - in scholarly arenas
 - Wheaton (1999)
 - More effective school superintendents found to possess SL characteristics
 - SL characteristics corresponded to preferred leader behavior of their subordinates
 - Irving (1999)
 - Examined over 200 leaders in churches, non-profits, and business settings and found SL characteristics significantly correlated with team effectiveness
 - Drury (2004)
 - Found that perceptions of organizational commitment positively correlated with SL
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Servant Leadership in Sport

- Many authors (e.g., Bennet, 2001; Kouzes & Posner 1999) calling for new models of leadership in sport settings which emphasize:
 - Athlete empowerment
 - Democratic behavior from coaches
 - Less emphasis on traditional autocratic fear-based coaching models
 - Modern day athletes (like their peers in the workforce) prefer leaders who:
 - Seek input regarding team decisions
 - Provide positive feedback and recognition
 - Exhibit sensitivity to athletes needs in and out of sport setting
 - Demonstrate an athlete-centered attitude (Westre, 2003)
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Purpose

- To examine the impact of SL coaching behavior on:
 - Athlete motivation
 - Athlete satisfaction
 - Athlete's psychological profile for sport
 - Mental toughness
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Methods

- Subjects
 - 251 Athletes from two Universities in the Pacific Northwest
 - 135 male, 110 female, 6 no response
 - Mean age 19.76 years (SD 1.36)
 - 94 scholarship athletes, 154 non-scholarship, 3 no response
 - 26% Freshman, 28% sophomores, 24% juniors, 18% seniors, 2% other
 - Teams included football, men's and women's basketball, men's and women's track and field, men's and women's tennis, swimming, baseball, and volleyball
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Methods

- Instruments
 - Demographic Information
 - Servant Leader Profile (Page & Wong, 2000)
 - Athletic Coping Skills Inventory (Smith, Smoll, Schutz, & Ptacek, 1995)
 - Sport Confidence Inventory (Vealey, 2002)
 - Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire (Duda, 1995)
 - Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire (Reimer & Chelladurai, 1998)
 - Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (Ryan, 2001)
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Methods

- Procedure
 - IRB approval
 - Data collected following team practices
 - Data Analysis
 - ID coaches hi and low on SL characteristics
 - Utilize MANCOVA procedure (controlling for gender and scholarship status if necessary) with Discriminant Analysis and Least Squares Means follow-up to determine if differences exist between athletes of hi and low SL coaches on ASQ, IMI, ACSI, SCI, and TEOSQ
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Results

- Gender Differences
 - Male and female athletes differed slightly on mental toughness inventories and ASQ, but not on motivation
 - Effect was evident for both genders, however, slightly more powerful for females
 - MANCOVA results show athletes who identify their coach as having a SL style:
 - Were more task oriented and less ego oriented than athletes with non-SL style coaches
 - Perceived more choice, had more interest / enjoyment, placed more importance on their sport and gave higher effort, and perceived less tension and pressure than athletes with non-SL style coaches
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Results

- MANCOVA results show athletes who identify their coach as having a SL style:
 - Were more confident in their physical, cognitive, and ability to be resilient than athletes with non-SL style coaches
 - Were better able to cope with adversity, were more coachable, concentrated better, handled pressure better, and were more free from worry than athletes with non-SL style coaches
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Results

- MANCOVA results show athletes who identify their coach as having a SL style:
 - Were more satisfied with their individual performance, more satisfied with the performance of their team, felt they were treated better, felt they received better training and instruction, felt more personally dedicated, and respected their coach more than athletes with non-SL style coaches
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Discussion

- Athletes with SL coaches were
 - More motivated
 - Mentally tougher
 - More satisfied with their sport experience
 - Coaches who possess SL characteristics appear to produce athletes with many desirable attributes for excellence in sport
 - While preliminary results are promising – the model is relatively untested
 - Further study is warranted
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