

There are 10 characteristics that are viewed as being critical to the development of servant-leaders. They serve to communicate the power and promise that this concept offers:

Source: Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership

- 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 disturbed. 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 has caused a feeling of loss. Servant-leaders seek to identify a means for building community among those who work within a given institution.