

Leadership is something that many people want to have, but doing what it takes to be a leader is much more difficult than it seems. A leader has to be bold and willing to go against what everyone else is doing if it is what they believe in. Leaders have to be original, not just copy what they have seen done by their peers, or what they are comfortable with. I have been fortunate enough to have gained a lot of leadership experience through playing soccer. I have been the captain of every team I have been a part of since middle school, and through these experiences I have learned what it takes to be a successful leader. The most important qualities to have as a leader in my experiences have proven to be: originality, confidence, communication skills, sympathy, responsibility, and composure. There are many more that could be included in that list, but those are the values that I found to be most valuable in my experience. By implementing these values into our team we were able to be ranked seventh in all of California and have a lot of success while competing in Europe.

One of the most important values I implemented every day as a captain was responsibility. As a captain I had to make sure that I held everyone accountable. At times confronting my team was difficult, but it was something that I had to overcome in order to have success. Another very important factor that helped me to lead my team was being a resource to my teammates. This goes along with the emphasis William Deresiewicz puts on close friendships in solitude in his speech to the graduating class of West Point. Being able to have long private conversations is a critical value of a leader that strengthens the bond of a team. An example of a time I had to be a resource is when I got a new teammate from Brazil who didn't know any english. He wanted to learn the language, but he didn't want to embarrass himself in front of the team. After realizing this I told him that whenever he wanted to know how to say something to come ask me and I would tell him. He began speaking fluently only three months after we had this conversation, and the more he learned to speak the better he played with our team. Lastly, and in my opinion most importantly, I had to lead by example at all times with my team. This applies to the way I trained, how I treated people, and other factors as well. I knew that in order to lead them I couldn't hold people accountable for their actions if mine weren't any better. By training as hard as I could everyday my teammates had to do the same in order to stay at the same level. When I confronted someone about not giving maximum effort, others who were working as hard as they could began to do the same. This not only made us a stronger team, but it also made us all better individually.

Aside from all of the duties I had to carry out while I was with my team, I also had to do things in solitude in order to strengthen the team. Like William Deresiewicz said in his speech, solitude is very important if one wants to be a true leader. A major adjustment I had to make was learning to handle things alone. Since I was the one that everyone came to there wasn't really anyone for me to go to. Although sometimes this was difficult, being in solitude helped me to be a better leader. I tried to get creative and come up with activities to help us bond, and tactics that could help us in games. Whenever I thought of something that could help our team we would have team meetings so that everyone could give their input. Therefore, although being in solitude isn't the funnest thing to do, it made me a much better leader, and I learned a lot from it.

In conclusion, all of these lessons learned from being the captain of my soccer teams taught me all of the leadership skills I have today and made me a better person. Additionally,

after reading William Deresiewicz's speech and using it to reflect on my own experience I realized that solitude and leadership do go hand in hand. I wouldn't be the leader I am today without the importance of solitude. Although that is important my ability to be creative and have confidence in myself was also a key factor in leading my team to success.