**Describe a time when you were able to lead and inspire by example to solve a problem or project. What was the outcome?**

My father and role model is an authoritative leader: assertive and visionary. Despite not going to college, he managed to build a successful company. Aspiring to be like him, I’m currently working on a networking startup - Cita - with my friends to learn how to be an effective leader.

However, I quickly realized that authoritative leadership didn't match a start-up’s culture of ambitious, young individuals. During our initial meetings, I’d always demand tasks to be completed on my timeline and also give new assignments without giving them any choice. I was excessively bossy, which led to discontent, arguments, and eventually, a divergence in our vision. I recognized the need for change in my leadership to prevent the project from falling apart.

To start with, I made sure that my member’s project deadline didn’t coincide with their own personal schedule. When my members voiced out their opinions on new ideas, I heard them out instead of deciding on my own. To mend the strained relationship, I had one-on-one conversations with each member to re-align our vision and mission: Connecting Bright Minds. I’d continue with constructive discussions like how to achieve our short and long-term goals, action plans, and re-setting our timelines. Moreover, I also implemented structured weekly meetings complete with organized agendas to update the team on what they’d be doing, keeping ourselves accountable for our tasks.

Now, we understand each other’s thoughts better, forming a strong chemistry and synergy in our workflow. We’re even considering expanding our team while employing the collaborative leadership style. Through this experience, I’ve learned that there is no universal formula to leadership. Adapting one’s leadership style to fit the team is the most crucial part. But, there’s one key takeaway: one can earn the respect of their team members if one shows sincerity to genuinely connect with them.

Hi Terence,

I think you’ve done a pretty good job ☺ the flow of the essay is logical, and you’ve shown how you learned to become a better leader through trials and errors.

What I think is slightly missing from the essay is the inspiration part, though. In your second paragraph, you’ve detailed the steps you’ve taken to improve the synergy in your team. However, I feel another angle that you can take is to highlight one or two actions instead and expand on the impact afterward rather than moving on directly onto your leadership actions.

For instance, you mentioned that you held weekly meetings where everyone voiced out their opinions honestly. Realistically speaking, since there was some tension and divergence in your team before, probably not everyone was comfortable sharing their ideas. Here, you can show how you inspired others to speak up by starting a discussion first. Maybe you told them that you were experiencing difficulty syncing up everyone’s schedule and so on. After hearing about your personal struggle, the other team members sympathized and started sharing stories about their own difficulties in managing time. Like the ripple effect, the members in your team became more open and honest about their vulnerabilities, and that’s how the bond in your team is strengthened now. (this is an example, so you should definitely choose one or two things that you believe is the highlight of your leadership experience.)

Best wishes!

Melinda