[Servant Leadership in Scrum context](http://being-sm.blogspot.com/2015/05/servant-leadership-in-scrum-context.html)

Servant leadership is a very interesting and complicated topic to think and write about. Here is a stab at servant leadership in Scrum context as I understand and experience it. I plan to write more on the topic as I continue my research. I'm particularly interested in getting at some sort of a measure or scale for various aspects of Servant Leadership I characterize below.  
  
Servant Leadership was first introduced as a theory by Robert Greenleaf in an essay published in 1970. You can read more about it at: [What is Servant Leadership](https://greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/)  
  
I absolutely loved this TED talk - [Lead like the great conductors](http://www.ted.com/talks/itay_talgam_lead_like_the_great_conductors). I think the speaker has talked about several traits of a servant leader extremely well there.  
  
Here are a few aspects of a servant leadership:

1. Trust, Integrity and Honesty
2. Influence
3. Service
4. Vision
5. Putting others first

Lets's talk about them one by one.  
  
A Scrum Master usually does not have direct authority over the team he or she is working with. This usually means that the Scrum Master needs to earn and keep the **trust**of the team members in order to effectively lead them. You cannot really gain trust from anyone overnight. A few ways to start on the path of gaining trust are to be honest and open in communication with the team; give them appropriate feedback - good or bad as and when necessary; truly listening to the team's feedback with an open mind, and implementing the suggestions they provide. I mentioned in my article about [Scrum - metrics](http://being-sm.blogspot.in/2015/05/scrum-metrics.html) that it is important to keep track of the right set of data points in order to build an environment where the team trusts each other and the Scrum Master.   
  
As Itay Talgam said in the TED talk above, a leader is responsible not only for creating a process but also for creating the conditions in the world where the process will be successful. It is extremely important for a Scrum Master to have the ability to **influence**people in order to create these conditions in the world. I find that engaging people in conversations is a good way to create lasting influence. Rather than commanding and directing people, asking good questions, showing empathy and listening to their answers with an open mind is a good way to engage people in real conversations and exercise influence. I recently heard an episode of [This American Life](http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/555/the-incredible-rarity-of-changing-your-mind), which I thought was very relevant to this topic.  
  
Next important quality is the attitude of a servant that Scrum Master needs to exhibit. It is the Scrum Masters that serve their team, and not the other way around. I believe there are 2 aspects of **service**. The first is to do what the team asks you to do. A couple of examples here can be - taking out the trash for the team, or making sure they have appropriate equipment to do their work etc. The second type of service that a Scrum Master provides their team is influencing other people in the organization to create the conditions for the team to be successful. However, it is important to note that the Scrum Master should not lose sight of their job to bring the team back on track, if needed with appropriate authority, while they are serving their team.  
  
**Vision**is an important quality for any leader to have. A Scrum Master is responsible for looking at the forest for the trees. Since the SM maintains the data points for the team, they are the first to know where the ship is headed. The SM needs to use this vantage point to have a vision - for both - the process and project / intended solution to help guide the team and the PO appropriately.  
  
Building a team that functions well involves giving real power to the team. Giving power to people involves **putting the team's interest first**. A good Scrum Master has a team oriented personality. They empower people rather than give permission. They help their team grow and succeed the best way they know how.  In doing so, they build a community of people that come to rely on, provide for and trust each other. All this can only be achieved by giving priority to the people and their needs. I believe the last video that Itay Talgram showed in the TED talk linked above is an excellent example of this.