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Leadership Paper

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There are several people that come to mind when I consider good leaders. Interestingly enough, many of these people are not in leadership positions. Over the course of my life, I have come to understand leadership and management as two different concepts. This is not to say that good leaders do not also make good managers but rather managers are not always good leaders. In my understanding, a leader is an individual that is capable of influencing the people around them in such a way that the situation is more than likely altered in such a way that it is “bettered”. I use the word “bettered” loosely because there can be many interpretations of it. Sometimes it can mean a higher chance of success, and sometimes it can mean the overall mood and stress levels of the group are lightened. Sometimes these leaders can make mistakes, but the intent can often be more important than the effect. Oftentimes, I will hear that leaders must be selfless and only have the best interests of the people that they influence at heart, but I truly can only partially agree. While I do agree that good leaders should not influence situations to the detriment of their followers, I also believe that the most ambitious leaders are often the best ones. Even selfish leaders can make good ones as benefits are not mutually exclusive, and it is up to the individual how to interpret the way that the situation has changed with any particular leader. In contrast, a good manager that is a bad leader is someone that can still make changes to “better” situations, but they typically come with long term detriments that are not always apparent. Personally, I have seen these detriments appear in the forms of lowered trust among group members, subtly decreasing performance that improves only after drastic change, and more offense taken in discussion than intended.

The first leader that I would like to mention is a coworker from my previous place of employment. I am not entirely comfortable sharing pictures of other people, so I will likely not be using them. Brandon, my coworker, was certainly not in any form of a leadership role over me occupationally; however, he certainly played the part in such a way that he was often seen as a second in command among employees. While no means perfect and certainly not selfless, he was extremely skilled in setting up situations that made things easier for everyone. Whether it be through short conversations to better an underperforming members day and mindset or mentioning tasks that had been overlooked, the situation was inarguably “bettered” by his ability to actively shift employees towards a better outcome. While I had harbored doubts about the relationship between leadership and positions of power before this, my understanding of the concept was truly reinforced while working with Brandon. Leadership is not about using positions of power responsibly, but the capability and proper usage of influence to work towards a goal.

The next person that I would like to talk about is not a previous coworker, but rather someone that I know of who often organizes gatherings of people online. Whether it be just for conversation, gaming, or discussion, it is not entirely uncommon to see anywhere between five to fifteen people in a Discord call together. The most interesting thing about this is the diversity among the types of people. Many will be extremely shy with low self esteems, and many will be of the louder and more brash temperament. In this type of environment, it is very easy for emotions to flare and personalities to clash in bad ways. Chance, the leader I am referring to, is very adept at stepping in when required, and I am not entirely sure how he does it. I have only noticed once or twice where he has failed to notice in years of these gatherings. I believe that it may have to do with genuinely understanding the people that he interacts with and the takeaways they will receive from certain flows of conversation.

The final person that I will speak about is not someone that I know personally but is often mentioned by my mother. My mother's old manager at work, I believe his name is Louis, was someone that falls under the more selfless umbrella as a leader. He was always willing to come in on a day off and take a shift for a lower employee if the need was there. Whether it be extremely serious or just general misfortune, he would step in to make sure that nobody's life was affected too harshly by having to leave work early or take a day off. He would also offer emotional support to anybody in need, and was extremely well trusted among the lower tier of employees. An important part of Louis that I will expand upon later is that he is not against standing up for workers against his higher ups when he feels that they made the right decision. While more of a stereotypical leader than the ones I talked about before, Louis was nothing short of exceptional, and I know that my mother will never forget about him.

An important theme represented among these leaders is that they are all extremely different. Brandon is obviously much more of a "for the greater good" leader that also exhibits selfishness in the way that they obviously take matters into their own hands for primarily their own benefit. A very "I want to have things running smoothly, so I do not have to stress," approach to leadership. On the other hand, Chance is, to put it simply, a mediator. He does not maintain leadership in the way that he positions people in a way that they are most effective. Instead, he holds leadership in the way that he influences people and lowers friction between members such that enthusiastic discussion and enjoyment can happen. Of all the leaders that I have mentioned, Chance's is probably my favorite and the type that I hope to emulate as I improve as a person and a worker. While completely different from Brandon in his selflessness, Louis is very similar to Chance; however, instead of mediating between coworkers, Louis mediates between coworkers and the workplace itself. I would say that a leader like Louis does not necessarily place people where they are best suited like Brandon, but instead he reduces the stress that comes with making decisions that are not "by the book." In a workplace, situations arise where a worker has to make a decision where they feel that they must choose between the answer that is obvious or they must adapt to the situation and choose the answer that they feel is best for the workplace. Often, the latter answers are completely avoided in fear of repercussion on the off chance that they are wrong. With a leader like Louis, it is more likely that, in the smaller situations, the better decisions can be made by workers because they know their leader will understand the motive rather than the exact outcome. This is very similar to the way that, rather than directly lead, Chance would instead mediate between coworkers. Louis would instead mediate between the workplace as a whole and his group of workers that he influences.

In conclusion, there are many types of leaders and the definition of a leader is not set in stone. Many people value different things in their leaders, and I understand that my interpretation of a leader is anecdotal to what I have experienced up until now in my life. With that in mind, I still cannot help but respect the capabilities of the people that I have mentioned and the lengths that they will go to better the situation for the group. The final point that I would like to mention is that many people feel betrayed when a leader makes a mistake. My counterpoint is that good leaders are not perfect and to consider them as such is an unfair and unhealthy perspective to hold as an individual. If we are to put trust into a leader such that they can influence us for the better, then we should also respect that the leader trusts us to understand that they are trying their

best. Just because someone “follows” a leader does not mean that they are children. If we expect to be treated as adults by the people that we respect, then we should be expected to be adults when they stumble as well.