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Positive Attributes Paper

Leaders have always interested me. I remember back in the 1990’s when I was very young; my mom would tell me stories about various leaders including Albert Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci, Ludwig van Beethoven, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and even Bill Clinton among a host of others. As I have grown older, so too did my interest in leaders. I began to ask myself many questions including, “What qualities do leaders have?”, “What made them effective?”, and “What characteristics did these famous individuals have to have in order to attain such influence in their fields?”

Today, as I find myself in a class with the main topic on leadership and what it takes to be one, I was ironically asked to look at myself and how others perceive my actions and traits for our first essay dealing with positive attributes. This being so, I decided to do some research and I consulted Webster’s dictionary which defines attribute as “an inherent characteristic…” which is “closely associated with or belonging to a specific person”. With this definition in mind, I started my quest to gather from my friends, family, coworkers, team members, and even acquaintances what extra value they felt I added.

The feedback that I received was not only incredibly memorable and interesting, but also deeply touching to me. Some attributes ranged from being supportive, an effective listener, being positive, intelligent, helpful, to even having tremendous compassion. Overall however, I believe a common trend and theme from the responses was an innate ability to care and go above and beyond for the individual and/or team. Although the responses taught me a lot about myself and the perceptions that others thought of me, it really was when I had all the responses and reviewed them that I really understood another tenet of being a leader and a better person. In order to fully explain this epiphany however, I will first review some of the responses that various people gave me and which helped led me to it.

To begin, I have to admit that when I first started this project and knew it was dealing with positive attributes, I found it incredibly awkward and difficult to ask so many of my friends, coworkers, and acquaintances to fill out responses that was directed towards me. However, I soon found that the responses that I received were very genuine but I could vaguely remember. A great example of this would be a response from my high school friend, Wilson Yeh. In his response, he noted that I would help drive him “home after track practice when I had no transportation method” while also “having a positive attitude everywhere” I went. To me, this was striking because I had completely forgotten about doing this yet he still remembered it.

As previously mentioned, these responses surprised me because of how quickly they all built upon a common theme. What also surprised me was the bluntness of the feedback; I found that many of my responses were short but incredibly powerful. A great example of this would be a response from another high school friend, Jay Kalia who said that I was a “nice guy to have around”, that I was “intelligent, plain and simple.” He also went on to say that the combination of the two led to “a lot of added value” including but not limiting to “Halo and [Nazi] Zombies”. Jay finished by saying that I was “extremely helpful” and that he recalled “of the great interview advice you gave me before I interviewed at Amazon”. These responses were different than what I expected which I would have thought would have been more about recent events and not bold statements.

Another aspect of this paper that surprised me was the fact people I have known for a long time have a very different view of me than people I have met recently in my classes. Although the common theme maintained, responses from my friend and fellow classmate, Gavin Cochran, showed how I began to, “proactively taking a position of leadership to address a task at hand.” This was very interesting to me due to the fact that I had been trying to take on more of a role in team projects. Gavin’s comments really helped verify that my efforts were making a difference. However, change was also notable in my friend and fellow classmate Zulema Garza. Zulema noticed that I grew a lot and “matured exponentially” over the past year and that I added value through being “respectful, honest, sincere, loyal, responsible, intelligent, out-going and daring”. She also noted that my “internship helped you get your life in focus”. It was striking how someone could notice a change like that.

Lastly, I really realized how some people really thought I was such a positive influence on their lives and how I did simple things to make this happen. For example, my girlfriend Martha Palomino commented that I was a “support system” and was there for her “through good and bad… You know how to be present during the most challenging time”. Although I always try to be there, I sometimes forget how things like this can be so important. She also added that I added value by “simply being you” and am able to “brighten the lives of others by smiling”.

This realization really impacted me; at that moment, after reviewing all the responses how this experience not only let me understand my added value but, how leaders really need to get feedback on what they do right. I really found that my hedgehog was to be caring and someone who does go above and beyond. However, it was really nice to see that my effort to grow as a person and leader has been successful and was not in vain. Without getting feedback however, I would have not known how others perceived me and whether or not I was in fact successful or added value. Ultimately, I not only learned more about myself and how I can leverage what I am successful at but that feedback is an important and crucial part actively being a better person or leader.