



Servant Leadership

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It seems fitting to me that a man whose last name was Greenleaf first coined the term “servant leader” in 1970. Robert Greenleaf’s concept was that a servant leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the “top of the pyramid,” a servant leader shares power and puts the needs of others first. Simply put, when you have a servant mindset, it is not about you.

The philosophy behind servant leadership has been the mentality of leadership at Greenleaf Trust since we started in 1998. Our goal has always been to hire talented people and provide them with a workplace culture that values, challenges, supports and empowers them. Servant leadership plays a big role in that workplace culture.

To be clear, not all leaders at Greenleaf Trust lead people. Many are technical leaders who lead by example and provide inspiration to others through their specific roles and actions. We believe that leading people is not necessarily a promotion but rather a career path. Those that lead people need to prioritize their team’s needs before their own. Their role in part is to enhance the relationship between those that they lead and the organization. They need to remove self-interest and personal glory from their motivation and focus on the growth and development of those they lead.



Greenleaf Trust executive leadership team cooks and serves lunch for team.

One way that we do this is through quarterly coaching. Every teammate at Greenleaf Trust has a trusted coach whose responsibility is to help those they lead become their best. Beyond informal daily interactions and discussions, coaches sit down formally one-on-one with those they lead on a quarterly

basis to discuss their impact, growth, and development. The coaching sessions are intentional, collaborative and candid. Feedback is real. Open-ended development opportunities are discussed and planned. Teammates leave those sessions feeling supported knowing that their coach understands their strengths and is an advocate for their growth. Successful coaches have a servant mindset; they are

humble, emotionally intelligent, authentic, empathetic and strategic. They genuinely care about those they lead.

According to past Gallup polls, shockingly, around 70% of the workforce is either “not engaged” or “actively disengaged.” When we annually measure engagement at Greenleaf Trust, the numbers are a little different. Consistently, even as a growing organization, we measure above 80% “highly engaged and satisfied” and 0% “disengaged and dissatisfied.” The difference in workforce engagement can be directly attributed to servant leaders. The ultimate beneficiaries of our servant leaders are our clients. We hope they can feel the difference from being served by a diversely talented team that is highly engaged and inspired to do more for them. ☑