

*James A. Autry*

## **Six Uncomplicated Guidelines for Servant Leaders:**

**1. Manage for the best and not the worst.**

Focus on the good behaviors and good performance of the majority of your people, and work to affirm them. Don't concentrate, as most managers do, on the few people who do not want to do well and who can't accept trust. These people will make themselves known B in good time, and you'll have ample opportunity to help them hange or help them leave. In the meantime, for the sake of your good people and the atmosphere of your workplace, emphasize affirmation not prohibition.

**2. Don't engage in police work:**

Also called "in-box management, this style is defined as sitting at your desk, monitoring the in-box, and waiting for someone to make a mistake so you'll have something to do. It's about policing, NOT leading.

**3. Be honest.**

Honesty is the single most important attribute in a leader's relationship with employees and fellow workers. Of course, honesty is difficult, but dishonesty is weakness.

**4. Trust everyone.**

This is even more difficult than honesty; in fact, trust is the most difficult thing of all, because most of us are conditioned to be always checking our backsides. Remember, most people want to do a good job and will do a good job if trusted to do a good job, so don't manage for the few who don't want to do a good job. Also understand that trust in and of itself provides an inner discipline for people; also, an environment of trust creates an medium in which peer pressure provides discipline for those who have difficulty accepting trust.

**5. Let your first response also be the caring response.**

Regardless of whatever management situation presents itself, always ask yourself what the most caring response would be. There'll be plenty of time for technical or professional or functional responses after you've demonstrated that you care. And if you don't care for people, you'll never be a servant leader and you should probably get out of management before it's too late. Save yourself a heart attack. Save your fellow workers the grief of having to deal with you. Remember the old maxim: "People want to know how much you care before they care how much you know."

**6. Care about yourself too.**

The servant leader never neglects the self, because good leadership involves caring yourself, physically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. You simply can't jumpstart other people unless your own battery is charged up.

## Rules To Live And Lead By

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**1. All growth and most good things come from paying attention.**

This means paying attention, and attending, to the relationships in our lives, whether with a spouse or child or friend or colleague or vendor or customer. Remember, the most important things are not obvious to the eye.

**2. Use every experience.**

Every experience is connected to every other experience, from childhood throughout our lives. Everything counts—every event, every episode, every interaction. This attitude requires you to be conscious of every moment and to put your full energy into living that moment and filling it with as much meaning as possible. Too many people are so focused on getting to the next thing that they never fully embrace the thing they're doing right now.

**3. Never think of employees as "labor." as a commodity.**

This is a grave mistake and an all-too-common one, particularly in organizations that employ hourly workers. Once you begin to think of people as commodities you do three things: 1. You rob work of its meaning; 2. You rob people of their opportunities to find meaning in their work; 3. Your leadership loses its humanity.

**4. Avoid the tyranny of technocracy.**

The great majority of managers ignore relationships and become technocrats, putting their energies into all the stuff that is easy to measure. Not only is this the easy way to avoid the difficult work of real leadership, but it also suppresses the human spirit at work. Remember the sign on Einstein's office wall: "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts."

**5. Abandon the career planning trap.**

The most frustrated people in the business world fall into two categories: those who did not get what they planned and those who did get what they planned.

**6. Avoid "building" a resume.**

You should do the work you want to do, not the work you think will make you more "marketable." There is far less future in doing things just to have done them rather than doing things just for the doing of them.

**7. Expect the unexpected and be ready to embrace change.**

Everybody talks about this, but the only way to be ready is not to be ready, is not to burden yourself with a mass of contingency plans and quick moves. Believe me, change will not happen the way you plan it to happen. It's best to simply pay attention, expect the unexpected, and go with it until you find opportunities within the chaos that change brings.

**8. Take the work seriously but don't take yourself so seriously.**

It is a great temptation for managers to believe that they ARE the business, thus whatever promotes them promotes the business. One of the greatest barriers to personal growth then becomes the desire to live up to your own hype. The danger is that you will become so focused on yourself that your people and your business suffer. Tip: If you ever hear yourself say, with exasperation, "I can't be everywhere," you're taking yourself far too seriously.

**9. Do not use long-term solutions to short-term problems.**

The most obvious quick-fix solution is often the one that comes back to haunt you.

**10. Never run away from anything.**

Always run to something Of course there are often reasons to leave a situation, but often the solution to a better situation comes from confronting the problem honestly and head-on rather than just leaving it behind.

## Five Of The Most Useful Questions For Servant Leaders:

### 1. What do you think we should do? Or, What do you propose?

Use these questions judiciously. And don't sound like a pop psychotherapist. If you're asked, "What do you think we should do?" answer the question.

These are good questions, however, when someone or a group has outlined a situation requiring a decision. The point is to avoid jumping right in with your own decision without asking and seeking a consensus. Chances are the people know what the decision should be, so you should honor their thinking and their hard work by seeking their answers. As it says in the Tao Te Ching, "When the (leader's) work is done, the people say, 'Amazing, we did all by ourselves.'"

### 2. If you were in my position, what would you do now?

This question and question number 3 are particularly excellent questions when you are in conflict, or a situation of potential conflict, with someone-either a colleague or peer or employee. You can also offer to "swap" positions, then assume the other's position as a role-playing exercise. This can build empathy on both sides.

### 3. If I could say exactly what you'd like to hear, what would it be?

As in question number 2, this is a very good question for conflict resolution. It may not turn out that you can say what the other wants to hear, but at least the other gets to articulate the answer as he or she would like to hear it. You can then go from that point with a clearer understanding.

### 4. What do you want me to do?

You often will be surprised that people just want you to listen, to understand, and not to DO anything.

### 5. If you could project ahead to the best possible outcome, the outcome you would most like to see: what would it be or what would it look like?

This is a great question during goal-setting, coaching, or career counselling sessions. Can also be used in conflict resolution.

## **Four of The Most Useful Words in the World:**

*"I could be wrong." - Or, put another way - "You may be right."*

Note: You will be amazed how these four little words—put either way—will change the *entire atmosphere in a room, the progress of a discussion, or the tone of a conflict. By using them, you simply open yourself to the possibility that another viewpoint or opinion may be the most appropriate one. And you demonstrate to others your willingness to admit mistakes or uncertainty. This is more powerful than you can ever imagine. Try it.*

## **Random Advice For The Servant Leader:**

- Include employees' personal growth as a part of your planning. It can pay off in long-term productivity. When discussing performance standards, ask employees: "What are you doing to improve/develop/enjoy yourself on or off the job?"
- Recognize that ego is the biggest problem in leadership. Be willing to give up "taking credit" in the short run. Instead, focus on creating the optimum environment for everybody's success. Remember: "You can accomplish anything as long as you don't care who gets the credit."
- Have employees write their own performance standards and performance appraisals. Prepare your version. Then compare them. Sit down together and discuss: "What are your strengths?" "What went wrong here?" "What resources do you need?" "What are your own goals?" "What can I do to help?"
- Keep in mind that the work bond is second only to family in its ability to tie people together. Create strong bonds through your caring leadership.
- Remember: "Work" and "Life" are not two separate worlds. Keep them in balance together. Be the same consistent person, manifest the same values whether at home or at work.