

LEADERSHIP: PROCESS OR PERSON?

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{Assignment: Write an essay in which you use one or more of the rhetorical modes we have studied in order to define a word that means different things to different people, preferably a "value" word of some kind; then suggest why and how your definition is better than others.}

(1) Leadership is a common word today. Schools need leadership, students need leadership, companies need leadership, countries need leadership. Although leadership affects all of us every day, it is often misunderstood. There is a difference between a leader and leadership. Many people attempt to define leadership by looking at the characteristics of leaders, yet many leaders do not use leadership. The success of Hitler, Machiavelli, and Presidents Johnson and Nixon was not based on leadership; these leaders often used power to rule people. Leadership, in contrast, is a three step process which helps leaders and followers achieve mutual goals.

(2) The leadership process starts with defining the problem. It is not enough to know that a problem exists. Leaders who use the leadership process must not only understand that there is a problem, but must also understand why it exists. The followers must believe in the leader's definition of the problem or a new leader will emerge from the followers to replace the old one. Leaders who allow their followers to define the problem for them are acting as followers because their "followers" are telling them what is wrong.

(3) Secondly, the leader must find a solution to the problem that benefits both the leader and the followers. Leaders who choose a solution which will benefit only themselves are not following the leadership model. They are only exercising power. The solution must advance the followers' goals. If this is not the case, a leader sharing the followers' views will emerge to become the new leader, in much the same way if the original leader had incorrectly defined the problem.

(4) The final step involves influencing and motivating the followers to carry out the solution. The leaders must convince the followers that their solution is the correct solution to the problem. A follower who is influenced will be motivated to carry out the leader's solution. The ability to influence followers comes from five primary sources: coercion, reward, charisma, authority, and expertise. Good leaders rely on a mix of power sources so that if they lose one source, they do not lose their ability to influence people.

(5) My high school football coach, Coach Trickey, offers a good example of leadership. When Coach Trickey started coaching four years ago, his team had a terrible record. He knew he had good talent, facilities, and parental support, yet the team could not win.

(6) First, Coach Trickey defined the problem. While the result of the problem was a losing record, the problem was not a lack of athletic capability, but a lack of school spirit. He felt that students needed to

support all sports and that athletics should be a stronger, more positive influence in the school. Lastly, he felt that football players were not as respectful or academically disciplined as they should have been.

(7) Coach Trickey next chose a solution that benefited the school, the team and himself. He decided that his coaching staff should provide leadership both on and off the football field. He decided that the football staff would monitor the players' academic progress and when a player's grades started to dip, he would be assigned a tutor. Players were to address all adults as "Sir" and "Ma'am" to promote respect. Finally, he decided that the entire student body needed to be motivated to support the school's athletic teams, not only football, but all sports.

(8) Coach Trickey's last and most important step was to influence and motivate his team. He started with a strict pre-season meeting. He made it very clear that he was the boss, and that the players would play his way. Practices were designed not only to develop football skills, but also team unity. Coach Trickey spoke to individuals and made announcements encouraging students to attend all sporting activities. His theme for the year was school pride. The tutoring program helped the players' grades and drew the teachers' support. Coach Trickey succeeded in winning Conference that year. However, his biggest accomplishment was a dramatic increase in student pride. The following year all sports, with one exception, qualified for State tourneys. Coach Trickey used the leadership process to achieve his and his followers' mutual goals.

(9) In contrast to Coach Trickey's beliefs and methods, the theories that Machiavelli wrote about in *The Prince* are not examples of leadership. Machiavelli's theories revolved around the needs of the leader only. The leaders in *The Prince* did not help their followers achieve their goals. All of the leaders' powers came from the authority of their position. Machiavelli was primarily concerned with how to gain and maintain a leader's power, not how to define and solve problems. He assumed that leaders would be able to motivate their followers because of their position.

(10) Leadership is a process which helps leaders and followers to achieve common goals. When leaders define a problem, decide on a solution, and motivate and influence followers, they are following the leadership process. The leadership process may be taught and practiced. Leaders do not gain leadership through a promotion. Similarly, a leader may or may not be using leadership. There are many famous leaders who used power to achieve their goals. A good leader will understand and use the leadership process to solve the problems he or she encounters.