



Explore your Philosophy of Leadership

Many models of leadership stress the importance of self awareness in those who aspire to lead others. When it comes down to it, we follow people we trust, and that means knowing what the person stands for—their values and beliefs.

Item number 26 in the Leadership Practices Inventory asks “I am clear about my philosophy of leadership”. To be articulate in this way requires looking deeply into what we believe to be true about ourselves and others. It means clarifying the principles and beliefs that guide our actions. A clear philosophy of leadership lets people know what you value, what you expect of them, and the basis for your own actions.

Consider these two meanings of *philosophy* from Webster:

Philosophy n.

- *A study of the principles underlying conduct or thought*
- *Guiding or underlying principles of a field of knowledge*

In order to better formulate your own philosophy of leadership, work through the following questions and exercises. Then articulate your own philosophy in a sentence or two.

1. What does it mean to me to lead others? What are the practical distinctions between leading, managing and other ways of working with people?

2. What are the basic concepts underlying the idea of leading? What principles do I recognize as fundamental to being seen as a leader?

3. For me, the fundamental truths about leading others include:

4. What is the connection between leading and following? How can I best articulate how I understand this connection? How do I demonstrate this understanding in my own behavior?

Now pull your thoughts together into one or two sentences that define your understanding of what it means for you to lead.

Example: I believe every person aspires to influence how the world will be tomorrow. In leading others, my role is to help people recognize and develop this power and put it to work for the common good.