

The Complete Education Portal

Palikkutam, The Education Observer » June 2023

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Views

Developing Leadership Qualities and Overcoming Challenges in Workplace



Seshadri Ramkumar

Dr. Seshadri Ramkumar, PhD, CText, FTI (UK), FTA (Honorary),
Professor, Nonwovens & Advanced Materials Laboratory, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX, USA

“It takes courage not to be discouraged,” stated Benjamin Ferencz, the last survivor and the lawyer of Nuremberg trials. Ferencz lived a long life fighting for justice till his 103 years and died this April. His life is a model for leadership and standing-up for justice.

We all face stresses and problems in life. In such circumstances, we all look up to leaders among us. A leader need not be the one with international/national status or has charisma.

There are everyday leaders who are our family members, neighbors and colleagues. Everyday is beautiful and we learn from these contacts on a daily basis.

Leadership Characteristics

An important character and indeed a must for a leader is to be trustworthy. With this much needed character, associated and equally important attributes are listening, maintaining confidence, conflict resolution, timely and effective communication. "A good leader is one who is proactive and plans for possible growth and complex issues on a continuous basis. Always being open to various ideas and ideologies has helped me to understand the dynamics of inter play between them," stated Ms. Ranjhani Ramalingam, who recently served as the President of Hindu Temple of Lubbock, USA and is a staff with American Bank Commerce.



"Being a leader is easy when everything is running smoothly. What defines a great leader is how they handle themselves in a crisis. A crisis can take many shapes and forms, and even though it might not be an actual crisis, if your employee feels that it's a crisis, it's important to work with them to be able to resolve the situation," opined Mark Hendley, Executive Associate, College of Arts & Sciences, the largest college at Texas Tech University.

Along these lines, Professor Glen Ritchie, Chair of the Department of Plant and Soil Science at Texas Tech University opined, "Complex situations are a challenge, because many of them are also time-sensitive. In my experience, addressing complex problems requires us not to overlook core principles when making decisions, and we need to communicate with everyone involved in as transparent a manner as possible." Interestingly Professor Ritchie has spent some time in Chennai some years back as part of cultural exchange, emphasizing the importance of global understanding.

@Glen Ritchie

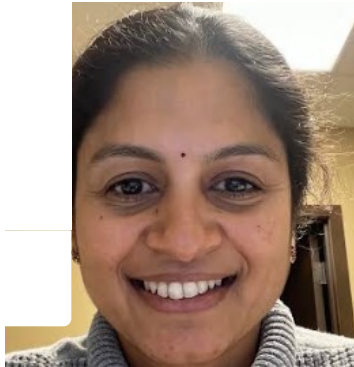
Community Outreach and Engagement

The COVID-19 has shown enormous vulnerabilities with regard to public healthcare system, supply chain issues and more importantly, the need for fair and balanced journalism. The pandemic situation highlighted the need for highest level of decision-making skills by upper echelons involving the government, multinational corporations and small enterprises. Even families were faced with tough decision-making situations. The world witnessed how the Presidents and Prime Ministers of leading nations and Chief Executives of multinational companies like Pfizer have to adopt new strategies and handle fluid situations by constantly adjusting the playbook, analyzing the severity and changing pandemic situations. In addition to these overt and publicly visible activities efforts behind the scenes such as team playing, leading difficult meetings, counseling and compromising have played important roles. People skills matter the most and is much needed in the days ahead.

Engaging with the Community

Man is a social being and engagement with the society is good for intellectual, mental, and economic health. All religions of the world support engagement with the society,

contributing to the society and highlight the need for inclusivity. There is a great Indian ancient saying “Ayam Ganana, Ayan Nethi, Ithi Lagu Chethasam,” which emphasizes the importance of belonging and serving the community. Leaders and in fact every member of the community has to know what is going on in their society and endeavor to contribute. In current times, contributions to the society and engagement is being recognized as “Corporate Social Responsibility.” Governments are also supporting these activities by giving tax exemptions. These activities are also gaining credibility in academic institutions particularly in the United States of America. Normally academia recognized three activities of duty towards tenure and annual review such as teaching, research and professional service. However as public tax payer money is spent on education, outreach and such engagement activities are considered useful and important. Because of these recognitions, effective communication skills, diplomacy and paying attention to sensitive matters occupy prominent roles.



In workplace, it is not only administrators, but also people in all levels of leadership roles need skills such as maintaining confidentiality, people handling ability, reasoning and effective communicating skill. In fact, colleagues who serve as Executive Associates, Administrative Assistants, elected people in organizations such as unions deal with sensitive matters on a daily basis and hence soft skills are much needed.

“Knowing team's background is key to any organization. Not just their technical or academic accomplishments, but also of their culture, family, lifestyles. Knowing these attributes enable to create a productive and compassionate work environment,” stated Ranjhani Ramalingam.

@Ranjhani Ramalingam

Holistic Approach and Future

Given the heightened need for many social skills, it is important for educational systems to impart such skills. Many countries, given the need to grow their economy, in the past 30 years have focused on technical, management and biomedical expertise and skill sets. However, to have overall growth and attending to future needs, imparting soft skills is needed. A simple, probably not the only solution is to encourage young students to read more and visit libraries. Such a small act will impart enhanced social skills and enhance belongingness.

Workplace situations always encounter hard and complex conversations. Putting them off leads to further complications. Mark Hendley agrees and stated, “Early in my career, I was afraid of having difficult conversations. As I gained experience as a leader, I learned the importance of having those tough conversations as soon as possible, to prevent issues from blowing up into bigger problems.



“Workplace skills require practice. No amount of study on presentation skills can replace presenting information to others. Therefore, wherever possible, students and employees should seek opportunities to practice the skills they hope to develop,” stated Professor Ritchie. In a similar vein, Hendley advocates continuous training and learning from colleagues.

“One of the best ways a company can improve morale is by encouraging staff to attend training. Training are one of the most important aspects a company can provide their staff. Training play a cruel role in making their

employees better at their jobs, as well as any of their future roles within the company.

Training’s also show employees that you care about their development and are willing to invest money into them.”

Mark Hendley

Confidence, diplomatic communication and contributing to the society are important attributes that are needed and it our duty to develop such next-generation skill sets in young people.

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