



DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP



National Association of
Educational Office Professionals

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATIONAL OFFICE PROFESSIONALS
1841 SOUTH EISENHOWER COURT
WICHITA, KS 67209

www.naeop.org

Preface

The National Association of Educational Office Professionals (NAEOP) has prepared this publication to promote and encourage professionalism in the workplace and the association of all educational office professionals.

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CHAPTER 1

DO YOU WANT TO BE A LEADER?

What is a leader? Perhaps the best way to start answering the question is to try to define what a leader does. A leader exercises leadership.

So a more fundamental question is:

What is Leadership?

A very simple definition of leadership is: *The capacity of one person to cause a group of persons voluntarily to contribute their efforts toward a common goal.*

A leader is an individual who understands herself or himself, the association, the interests, attitudes, goals, values, philosophy, and problems of the association.

Effective leadership depends upon effective interpersonal relations and sensitivity to the good in those with whom you work. You must also be motivated to lead, be capable of making the best possible use of the talents, skills of your officers and your membership—in other words, the human resources of your association.

Your primary challenge is to discharge your duties and responsibilities in such an efficient, effective manner that others accept your leadership and want to work with you.

Can Anyone be a Leader?

Some believe leadership is a natural gift that some people are born with and others are not. According to this theory, no one can learn to be a leader unless born with the natural ability to be one. Others believe one of normal intelligence can learn to become a leader in the same way one learns to solve other problems.

It is not necessary to decide which of these two theories can be proven in practice. Actually, there is evidence both theories have some validity. Some people seem to have a greater natural ability to lead than others, but those with less natural ability can learn how to make the best use of whatever leadership ability they have. Study and practice can improve leadership skills just as study and practice can improve one's administrative skills.

Mastering the techniques is only part of the story! Once the basic rules are learned, the individual's personal qualities determine how well the rules are applied. It is these personal qualities that take a person from merely a passable leader, to a truly outstanding one. Two persons may have about the same natural gifts for leadership, but one of them will make better use of leadership opportunities. Sometimes it even seems as though one

creates one's own opportunities; but what is more likely is that he or she is ready to make the best of the opportunities when they arise.

Thus the answer to the question "Can anyone be a leader?" seems to be "Yes." Anyone, that is, who is willing to study and practice to make full use of natural talents can become an effective leader.

Why are Leaders so Important?

Any organized group activity – association or otherwise – must have leaders. To succeed in its purposes, the group's individual members must be able to look to someone for guidance and direction of their efforts. This is true of political groups from the smallest town council to the complex agencies and bureaus of national government. It is true of businesses from the smallest family-owned shop to the giant nationwide corporations. Without leaders, none of these groups could function effectively.

At What Level is Leadership Most Important?

The president of a national association might seem to be more important than the leader of a state or local association. The national president leads a much larger number; is responsible for many more members; and has broader objectives. Success or failure will have a much greater impact on the outcome of an objective. But is she or he really more important than the state or local leader of an association?

National, state, and local associations are linked by a *chain of affiliation*. The strength of the chain depends equally on each of its links. Remember the old saying about a chain being only as strong as its weakest link? If one link breaks, the chain has failed to that extent. If your national association is to succeed in its role of upgrading the status of the educational office employee, all the links in its chain of affiliation must be strong. In this sense, the leaders at all levels are equally important. A weakness at any level will be felt at all levels above and below it. Good leaders are, therefore, essential at every level.

If there were a surplus of outstanding leaders at the national level but a shortage of outstanding leaders at the state or local levels, we would not have a viable national association. Nor would the situation be any better if the local and state levels were crowded with fine leaders while national posts were held by poor leaders. To have a viable national association, we must have good leaders at every link in the chain of affiliation.

What Qualities Must a Leader Have?

A method of deciding what qualities an association leader must have is to ask the people affected by this leadership – the membership. Members know what kind of leader they prefer, need and what qualities they want their leaders to possess. When members have been asked what kind of leader they want, their answers have been remarkably consistent. Again and again, they have emphasized the following qualities.

- Competence* When members say they want their leader to be competent, they mean several things. In general, they want their leader to be well-trained in the technical requirements of the job. They also want their leader to know a great deal about the skills and requirements needed by the members. Both kinds of competence are necessary for a leader to be capable of teaching, helping members and to earn the confidence and respect of the members.
- Unselfishness* This includes such qualities as the leader's loyalty to the membership, serious and sincere concern for their welfare as educational office professionals and as persons, and confidence and trust in their ability to perform their duties as members of the association.
- Decisiveness* A leader's decisions usually relate to the association's objectives and the means of attaining them. When members have confidence in their leader, they will tolerate an occasional decision that turns out badly – if they believe it was made in good faith and not as a result of incompetence or neglect of their best interest. A leader who waivers back and forth between possible alternatives cannot inspire the kind of confidence essential to effective leadership of an association.
- Common Sense* While the term "common sense" is less precise than the other qualities we have been considering, it has meanings that are widely understood. A person with common sense is one who exercises good judgment in any situation, who is tactful rather than rude, and who doesn't become rattled under pressure. Few things are more damaging to a leader's effectiveness than a reputation – deserved or not – that they lack common sense.

Do I Really Want to be a Leader?

This question can only be answered by each individual. Only they can know their inner feelings and motives. Only then can they honestly answer such related questions as: Do I enjoy assuming new and more demanding responsibilities? Am I willing to give the time and effort necessary to qualify me for higher leadership positions? Do I seek leadership only for the prestige and fringe benefits, or do I really want to be more useful and valuable to education, my association, and my fellow educational office professionals? The National Association of Educational Office Professionals is continually helping people make this important decision about them. It provides many opportunities to demonstrate potential

leadership through chairmanship of, or membership on, national committees; through representation as a delegate at the Advisory Council; and through specialized workshops offered at conferences.

Is a Leader's Reward Worth the Effort?

Sometimes people seek leadership positions under the impression that leaders don't have difficult jobs. The leader's job almost always seems easier than your own. Of course the very opposite is true, as any leader will readily verify. They will tell you that each time they have advanced to the next step on the leadership ladder, their duties have become more complicated, their responsibilities more demanding, and their work more arduous and time-consuming.

If this is true, why would anyone ever decide they want to be a leader? More prestige and privileges are nice, but few leaders believe they are enough to compensate for the burdens and challenges that accompany greater responsibilities. There must be other, more important motives for seeking the leadership "road."

The best leaders will tell you the great responsibilities are, in themselves, the single best reward of being a leader. What they mean is that there is a unique kind of personal satisfaction in tackling and mastering a tough job, especially when that job is to direct and lead a group of people, whether it is a local, state, or national association, toward a goal that is important to them, to the association, and to education.

Good leaders are convinced the rewards of leadership more than offset the worries, the hard decisions, the setbacks, and the disappointments all leaders experience along with their successful accomplishments.

People who have the innate talent for leadership but fail to develop and apply this talent are cheating themselves and their fellow educational office professionals. They deprive themselves of the rich tangible and intangible rewards of leadership and withhold from their association their most valuable assets.

CHAPTER 2

A GOOD DISCUSSION LEADER

A good leader shows no partiality either for a particular point of view or for any of the members of the group. Although he or she does not allow inaccurate information or unsubstantiated opinion to go unchallenged, a good leader seeks to draw a challenge from other members of the group. To be effective, facts must be sifted from opinion. The leader's job is to stimulate *others* to think, express themselves and to pull together the contributions made by the members. As skills increase, the discussion leader tends more and more to remain in the background while the participants share the limelight.

What are the Duties of the Discussion Leader?

- ◆ To set the stage for the discussion.
- ◆ To help the group get acquainted.
- ◆ To introduce the topic or to outline the goals or purposes of the group.
- ◆ To start, stimulate, and keep the discussion on the subject.
- ◆ To clarify and define conflicting issues and opinions.
- ◆ To coordinate and integrate the discussion by proper use of questions and transitional summaries.
- ◆ To draw out the “timid soul” and keep the dominant person from monopolizing the discussion.
- ◆ To summarize the whole discussion by pointing out the conclusions reached or the progress made.

Preparation must be distinguished from expertness. The leader needs a general knowledge of the subject and should be familiar with available source material and discussion aids. The role of the leader is that of the member who raises some question on the basis of a preliminary study of the topic. It is not that of the expert who answers the questions.

Discussion, by its very nature, is an informal process. Formality and stiffness stifle free expression. A social and personal atmosphere before the meeting actually starts helps set the stage in a mental sense.

The purpose of the introduction is to state the topic, define the areas for discussion, and relate them to the interest of the group.

Questions of one kind or another are the most frequently used method of starting the discussion. Opening questions are more successful when they call for *opinions* rather than *facts*. Nearly everyone has an opinion; not so many have facts. *How* and *why* questions that ask for reasons or causes and questions beginning with “do you think” are more likely to evoke a response. The opening questions should not be too broad or general.

A facilitator’s role of keeping the discussion going requires the leader to keep one or a few participants from “hogging the show.” She or he must also curb interruptions of one member by another, side conversations, more than one person speaking at the same time and a heavy dictatorial touch that acts to suppress discussion. Proper timing, judgment, and tact come with practice.

CHAPTER 3

THE GAVEL IS YOURS

You have reached the moment of decision by accepting the gavel, your symbol of authority, with great pride and even greater humility.

Your association has bestowed upon you the highest honor it has to offer — the role of leadership.

Suggestions for Dynamic Leadership

Planning

List what is going to happen; outline the purpose of the meeting. Check every detail before you start the meeting. Is . . .

- AV equipment ready?
- Sound system functional?
- Presentation compatible with the equipment provided (check the presentation to make sure it works on the laptop, etc.)?
- The heating system, ventilation, and lights satisfactory?
- The seating capacity adequate?
- The seating arrangement conducive to promoting the goals of your meeting?

Promotion

- Email or mail your notices on time. A system of two notices assures better attendance.
- A telephone or email committee is a good way to stimulate attendance. A short personal note often works wonders.

The Room

- Select a quiet and pleasant room for the meeting.
- Arrange seating so the door is behind the audience.
- Provide a platform for the speaker.
- Get the best chairs available.
- Keep the chairs far enough apart to accommodate everyone.
- Give the listeners a place to put their coats.
- Know where the light switch is if the speaker wants the room darkened.
- Know the voltage and current available when using electrical aids.

Care of the Speaker

- Make certain speakers have transportation to the meeting place, know the location and time of the meeting.
- Give speakers information about their audience. Are they mostly women? What are they interested in? What will they expect from the speaker?
- Be sure your speakers know how long they are to talk.

Leadership

- You are the chairman.
- Tell the group something about the speaker in your own words. Don't give a lengthy introduction.
- Don't sit behind the speaker and soak up the speaker's spotlight.
- Don't leave the meeting room after you introduce the speaker. If you don't want to hear what the speaker says, how can you expect your group to be interested?
- Don't call out other people or start a conversation while the speaker is giving his/her message. Avoid giving the impression you are not listening.
- Be ready to help the speaker with visual aids.
- Don't ask for questions without at least having one or two planted in your group.
- Repeat the questions when they are asked.
- Don't argue with the speaker over comments made.
- Graciously thank the speaker.

Nine Attributes of Leadership

The following nine basic attributes to good business leadership are adapted from an article by L.V. Fort, market training counselor, in an issue of the *Dartnell Office Administration Service*. They are:

1. Ability to gain the confidence of subordinates, colleagues, and superiors.
2. Ability to persevere until the leader's goal is attained.
3. Ability to sell the leader's goal to others in terms they will not only understand but will enthusiastically support.
4. Willingness to listen to and adopt the ideas of others, no matter what the leader's status on the company totem pole.
5. Ability to get the leader's thinking across to others without being misunderstood and without offending.
6. Genuine interest in people.
7. Ability to understand the reactions of people and appreciate "how they got that way."
8. Not letting the opinions of others persuade the leader to act unwisely.
9. Forthrightness – for the leader knows it is fatal to keep people wondering where he or she stands.

Leadership Traits

There are ten traits exhibited by successful leaders in almost every field, according to Dr. Whitt N. Schultz, a career consultant and motivational expert.

1. They observe with application. They observe and absorb. They look at everything like it's the first and last time they'll ever see it.
2. They know how to listen – really listen! Listening is wanting to hear.
3. They take copious notes. They capture ideas as their senses alertly respond to react to them.
4. They welcome ideas. They urge others to bring their best thinking on a subject. They're open, responsive, sensitive, aware, and encouraging.
5. They value time highly. They use it skillfully.
6. They set regular goals. They expend their energies toward solving ways to reach those goals.
7. They try to understand first. Then, and only then, do they judge.
8. They always anticipate achievement and build on their strength.

9. They know how to ask clear, courteous, and incisive questions. Questions are the creative acts of intelligence.
10. They know how to organize their approach to challenges and how to immediately focus their total mind power on the relevant.

Leaders Who Fail

1. They find it easier to do it themselves than to find ways of letting others help.
2. They forget to praise.
3. They don't have time to read the "helps" sent to them.
4. They don't have time for adequate preparation such as their agendas.
5. They are too occupied with last-minute tasks to make each member feel welcome and needed.
6. They permit the association to go from meeting to meeting with no plan for the year.
7. They arrange too few activities in which all may share.
8. They lose contact with their committee chairmen and their work.
9. They do not provide leadership or train chairmen or new leaders for the future.

Additional Responsibilities of Group Leader or Chairman

1. Start the meeting on time.
2. Take sufficient time at the first session for people to get acquainted.
3. Do your best to make everyone in the group get a "feeling of belonging" to the group instead of feeling like an outsider.
4. Help establish a climate or working situation conducive to active participation of all members of the group. Suggest, guide, and lead so all will feel free to take part.
5. Introduce the topic or topics to the group simply, clearly, and without bias. As you do this, do not express any of your own opinions.
6. Try your best not to lose the interest of your group by prolonging unnecessarily the discussion or belaboring a given point.

7. Do what you can to encourage every person to express his or her ideas. Recognize good points as they are brought out in discussions.
8. Keep discussions on track. If the discussion lags or gets off the topic, stop occasionally for a pause with the announcement: "Perhaps we should stop just a minute for us to find out where we are," "What has been said that we want to record," and "What should our next steps be?"
9. Keep participants on track with intelligent, analytical, and clarifying questions.
10. Conflicts frequently arise in group discussions. Many of these can be avoided or limited if the discussions are carried on in concrete, understandable terms. Conflicts usually occur because of:
 - a) A lack of understanding of the meaning of a statement or idea expressed by a person.
 - b) Some faulty reasoning.
 - c) A difference in values.
 - d) The desire of a person to save face when his/her own stand is proven unpopular.
 - e) A "know-it-all" attitude.
 - f) Emotional upset or instability in the face of an issue or issues directly affecting the individual, etc.
11. Contribute to the discussion when you have something relevant to say. Make your contribution and "let the ball be passed."
12. Pay close attention to what is being said and do not take a stand before you know the facts. Perhaps the ball can be passed by stating that "_____has expressed these ideas." Then invite comments or discussion by others.
13. In concluding the meeting, end on a note of interest (perhaps with a good summary or with a compliment to the group, if such is deserved). In this way you can reawaken the interest of the group and end the meeting on a positive note.
14. If there is to be a follow-up meeting of the group, try to clarify the next steps or actions indicated by the group decisions before the meeting.

CHAPTER 4

GOAL SETTING GUIDELINES

Someone once said any road is a good one if you don't know where you're going.

But to get where you want to go, you need to know the route. It has to be like a road map. The starting point must be identified, the check points pinpointed, the time it takes to get there calculated, the money to be spent for the journey borrowed or taken from savings, and various other things.

It is as much combining the decision-making rules as the problem-solving guidelines. Whichever you select, you come up with a system that applies specifically to you.

What do you want to do in terms of improving your own behavior? Would you like more tolerance with the children or to be less defensive when your supervisor asks you to stay to work on a special project on your bowling night? Would you like to be more attentive at committee meetings or be less self-conscious when speaking before groups?

Whatever the goal about behavior, be certain that you are treating the objective and not the symptom. If you have no patience with your children, it may be because you are bothered by something inside you, not with them. *Examine* it. See what really needs attention.

Want to make a more tangible goal? Something in the area of saving for a trip to Europe in three years...or buying a second home or car...or going back to school and getting the degree that has been so elusive...or getting that new assignment when "What's His/Her Name" retires next fall...

Write out the goals or changes you want to achieve.

Is it realistic?

Is it challenging?

Can you surpass it? Will it stretch you?

Can others help? Who? How? Will they? What if they don't? Who else figures in your plan? What about cost? Can you borrow the money? Earn it and be patient? How will you know when you achieve the goal? What conditions will exist? Can you reassure yourself that new goals will be set when goals are achieved?

The only thing standing in the way of your success is a poorly defined goal and lack of commitment on your part. Make as many goals as you see. Put them in proper priority. Which ones do you want the most and which can be reached quickest?

Sequence of Successful Goal Setting

1. If you want to manage your time better, the first step is to ask yourself this question: “Exactly what are my goals?” Do you know what you want? Define your goals only after you have made an objective study of your abilities, aptitudes, and interests.
2. Visualize, in detail, exactly what you want. Set realistic goals you can attain with a little challenge to yourself. Develop your short-term and long-term goals.
3. Have a great desire. Make up your mind you are willing to endure the pain of struggle for the comfort, reward and the glory you want to achieve.
4. Write out your plans to obtain your objectives. Set goals for your personal life, for your job, and for your professional growth.
5. Take the necessary steps to accomplish your plans. Set goals for different time periods: i.e. six months, one year, two years, five years, and retirement years.
6. Know the educational requirements of a job. If you do not meet them, find ways to acquire those requirements.
7. Have the right mental attitude, also the faith and confidence to know you have the ability to accomplish your goals. Recognize the training afforded by leadership roles in an organization. Visualize yourself in the job you want and the role you want.
8. Make the quality of your work, your dependability, and your relationships with your peers and supervisors fit your goal. Analyze your goals. Are they the goals you really want and are you willing to work for them? Will these goals work for your organization?
9. Accomplish, complete, make yourself promotable, and enjoy your goals.

Motivation

The following are ideas about motivation for those who need people because they need the love others can give them.

- The major part of life is acceptance of others and yourself.
- When I accept myself as I am, I change, and when I accept others as they are, they change.
- All of the research we have on occupations indicates that, while you need to know a lot, the best predictions we can make on your success will have to do with your basic attitude towards people and things and the world around you.

- It is crucial you see that you have always been controlling the behavior of the people around you by the way you controlled your own behavior.
- We all need to understand that each of us was uniquely created...and our beauty lies in our uniqueness...and not in trying to be something we aren't.
- We need to make peace with our past, so we can walk away free.
- I fight self-awareness the way I do, because I have to take a good hard look at some of these sad things that are me.
- Expect the best out of yourself. To do that, you have to accept yourself as halfway decent.
- The more you trust your associates, the more you believe in them...and yet they are the same people. It's just a difference in what you expect of them.
- I'm firmly convinced it isn't easy to love and be loved at first but it gets easier.
- Self-acceptance is so hard to get, you can't do it a day at a time. I've found I need to run my life five minutes at a time.
- The more real I am, the more real people there are around me. So being real helps us have richer, deeper relationships with the people around us.
- In guiding your own learning and in speaking of your feelings, your confidence is crucial to you...only you can be the captain of your ship.
- I think there is only one reason to do something. That's because you love to do it.
- How long a life is, is of little consequence. What counts is what we do with the days we have.

Motivation – To Your Full Potential

Ask yourself – “What do I really want to achieve, do, own, become?”

- Put your plans on paper. Spell out goals and ways to reach them. When you determine your own personal goals and business goals, arrange your goals in the order of their importance. You may be surprised to find certain things you put down will not remain on your list after you have finished mulling it over and revising it. Every plan must be in writing. Written plans are powerful. They direct you toward your goal. A distant goal is the strong medium that keeps enthusiasm strong and ready for the climb.

Ask yourself – “Do I have a real burning desire?”

- Know your values and your priorities. Be specific. The advice you give yourself must be such that you can put it into practice. Seek relevant information.
- Break down the job into small enough pieces so you have no excuse for not starting it. Center on individual needs and resources: focus on the resources in the world around you and the alternatives to which you can or want to commit yourself.

Ask yourself – “What are the obstacles?”

- Establish checkpoints so you can evaluate your progress. Examine how these checkpoints feel. Remind yourself of benefits you expect from completion of the job. Develop a contingency plan in case your first choice doesn’t work out. Avoid temptation by deliberately avoiding circumstances or thoughts that might sidetrack you. Recognize your limitations. Don’t set goals you don’t expect to reach. Be willing to take the risk and don’t be afraid to try new methods. Set deadlines and hold yourself to them.

Ask yourself – “What are the rewards?” and “Is it worth it?”

- Make an honest distinction between “I can’t” and “I don’t want to.” Realize important decisions require commitment and some continuity over time.
- Improve your self-persuasion ability. Learn to know when you are reasoning and when you are rationalizing. Promise yourself rewards; small rewards for small accomplishments, big rewards for big accomplishments. Use the stimulation provided by good news to do extra work. Recognize conflicts and make a choice.
- Give yourself the right to make mistakes. No one is perfect.

Seeking relevant information is important. Get all the data you can about the situation, the circumstances, and the possibilities. If you try to decide and something isn’t clear, wait until you get more information and then repeat the process. Open yourself up to gathering information in those areas you may never have considered previously. In the process you are enlarging your knowledge and perhaps finding relevant factors that will strongly influence your decision.

But at some point you have to stop and make your decision, realizing your decision can be changed or modified. If you make the “wrong” decision you don’t have to stick with it at any cost but you do have to be committed to it long enough to test it thoroughly. If you believe in something and you have your heart into your goals, it is worth it.

Effective Decisions

1. A DECISION is always a choice between alternatives (one alternative is to do NOTHING). Dissenting opinions often disclose creative solutions not thought of in the beginning.
2. A manager's decision is often an instinctive first reaction to something bothering the manager. If a person tests this reaction against some dissenting opinions, a logical solution (rather than an instinctive one) can be developed.
3. Decisions are often made on the basis of WHO is right, rather than WHAT is right. When a manager encourages dissent, you can be sure the personality of the dissenter does not affect the final decision.
4. No manager is completely without prejudice. Your own opinions often reflect your prejudice, but because of your position your arguments carry much weight. Honest dissent can overcome this.
5. Many decisions are the RIGHT solutions to the WRONG problems. Dissent often uncovers the fact that we have defined the problem incorrectly.
6. An effective decision is often a COMPROMISE between strongly opposed points of view. In order to make the best compromise—one which will work in the long run—we must let all sides make their strongest possible case.
7. Those who argue for FACTS rather than OPINIONS often forget facts can usually be found to support any preconceived opinions.
8. A good leader takes advantage of the EXPERIENCE of the staff and of the associates in making decisions. These people often have opinions based on their experience, but lack immediate facts to back them up.
9. By gathering all these PRO and CON opinions, the leader can decide what FACTS are needed to make the best choice of alternatives in the final decision.

CHAPTER 5

DAILY AFFIRMATION

I Was Born to be Great!

- I will gain a positive attitude.
- I will gain a renewal of confidence.
- I will gain a new enthusiasm never experienced before!
- I will look to my assets instead of my liabilities.
- I will look to my potential instead of my problems!
- I will become more alert to potential and possibilities!
- I will enter every day without giving way to the possibility of defeat or failure.
- I will become a better listener and not prejudge others.
- I will develop a more creative imagination.
- I will look to ways things can be done instead of looking for reasons why things can't be done.

Planning Helps You Reach Your Goals

Apply the principles of Management by Objectives (MBO) to your own life. If you follow this advice, you will be in a very select group. Less than one percent of the population has written a plan for personal success. Many people are reluctant to write down a formal plan because they fear failure. They think, "If I state my goals, others will know if I fail to reach them." That is not necessarily so. If you don't want others to know your goals, don't tell them. The important thing is that you know what you are trying to accomplish. Drifting aimlessly seldom leads to success in any field.

So far as career is concerned, not having a plan leaves you in an uncertain state. Career counselors agree, people who set specific goals achieve better results than those who don't. Organizing your thoughts in writing a plan will prepare you to take the next step. It might be registering for a business course, asking your supervisor to approve your attendance at a special seminar, volunteering to assume an extra responsibility at work, or reading a book on office politics. Writing down definite goals tend to encourage people to actually do the things they know they should instead of putting them off indefinitely.

A written plan isn't a straitjacket. It won't keep you from discovering shortcuts or changing your mind and taking advantage of interesting opportunities that present themselves. It will, however, free you from the confusion of trying to pursue too many goals at once. A plan will focus your attention on one small step at a time.