

Servant Leadership in Sport Management

Module #5 Response Paper

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Definition of Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a leadership style that prioritizes the needs of others, especially followers, over those of the leader. In contrast to classical methods of leadership based on authority, power, or control, servant leadership promotes empowerment and development of individuals within an organization. This ethos is an attitude rooted in ethics, humility, and caring for the health and well-being of others. Servant leadership is described in most recent research as “other centeredness and ethical behavior,” serving people and placing service to others ahead of personal gain or status.

In the field of organizations and sports, a servant leader is a facilitator and is responsible for setting the conditions for collaboration, trust, and personal growth. Servant leaders work alongside their teams instead of directing from the top down so that the team members have enough resources, confidence, and support in place to succeed.

Key Characteristics of Servant Leaders

Servant leaders possess a distinctive blend of qualities that set them apart from traditional leaders. For one thing, empathy is key, since servant leaders seek to appreciate the needs and views of their followers. This enables them to forge strong working relationships and gain trust from the teams.

Secondly, humility is a defining characteristic: servant leaders do not seek recognition but instead focus on lifting up others. A second defining trait is a dedication to improving others.

This matches best with the educational and coaching atmosphere; where development is the main

point. Also on this list is ethics and integrity on the table, which means that decisions are made fairly and morally.

Servant leaders also exhibit an open style of listening and talking, opening the doors, by encouraging feedback and collaboration. Most importantly, however, community building is a crucial aspect as servant leaders seek to establish a supportive, inclusive environment that increases team unity.

They are in turn reflected in sport environments as leaders who favour fostering athlete and team success through their development, as a whole and over short term victories or fame.

Benefits of Servant Leadership in Organizations

There is overwhelming evidence that servant leadership correlates with well-being in an organization. One of the key benefits from it is that it leads to better employee well-being. In sports organizations where servant leadership is observed, it significantly predicts life satisfaction, teamwork, and even physical health among employees. Such people have no doubt about the well-being of the employees. Servant leaders enable stress reduction and higher job satisfaction through their fostering of an environment where these values can flourish.

Another advantage is better team performance and work together. And people enjoy being in the company of people that care about them. In the domain of sport, servant leadership correlates with improved athlete satisfaction, motivation and performance outcomes.

Moreover, a servant Leader type style of leadership helps create a more corporate culture that is much stronger. Because this style of leadership focuses on ethics and trust, it creates a culture where people feel safe, respected and empowered. Leadership practices as described here can be seen to result in high levels of active organizational citizenship behavior, the willingness of employees to deviate from their formal duties to support the organization and encourage their peer's well being.

Furthermore, servant leadership encourages sustainability in the long run. With people development and relationship management organizations will continue to be secure and adaptable across time. By investing in people, leaders create a pipeline of future leaders, continuing success.

Personal Reflection: Application in Sport Management

If sport management is someone's business and nothing else, servant leadership would be valuable and appropriate in today's world because a life based around people, athletes, coaches, staff, fans. Servant Leadership: Applying the principles of servant leadership is about putting the development of both athletes and the people you are working with before your own popularity or immediate success.

But as a sport manager or coach, for instance, servant leadership can be seen with emphasis placed on developing athletes, not only winning games. Such might include personal feedback, helping athlete's academic and personal development, and creating a supportive team environment among other things. By not scolding mistakes, the servant leader, rather than

blaming athletes for errors, would use them for teaching and help to build self-assurance, and grit, in future athletes.

A different one is the communication one. It would require a servant leader in sport management to be a listener to both athletes and staff, as he would include everyone (i.e. their perspectives). This might be a team meeting when a player expresses a concern, provides input on strategies or touches on team dynamics. Valuing feedback, the leader promotes trust and participation.

Servant leadership can also manifest in this figurehead-hip form of mentorship. A sport manager might spend time mentoring younger coaches, interns or student athletes, in ways that will prepare them to grow up professionally and personally. And it dovetails with the concept of leadership as service in which the fruits of being a leader can be gauged against others.

Servant leaders are also team culture and relationship-oriented. In academic sport, for instance, this might include leading team building events within a high school or college athletic team, acknowledging individual contributions (the “real,” as we now know, the way leaders often say it), and promoting accountability in a supportive way. Leading with community enables the leader to build a community of community that supports both performance and satisfaction.

Last but not least, servant leadership is used in decision making. As a sport manager, you might think less about financial or competitive results, rather about the ripple effects on athletes and

staff. For example, scheduling practices in a manner appropriate for student study highlights this idea of the well-rounded development of athletes.

Supporting Research Article

In a recent peer reviewed study published in Sport Management Review in 2022 by Swanson, the influence of servant leadership on employee's well being is shown. This research shows that servant leadership had a positive influence on psychological, social and physical well being, with teamwork serving as a major mediator.

It suggests that servant leadership and those putting their worker's welfare first are more effective tools for enhancing individual and collective performance at work for example, in a sport setting which is one such example. The results further support that servant leadership is not just an ethical imperative yet also practical in relation to increased performance, satisfaction, and overall corporate effectiveness.

Conclusion

Servant leadership is a powerful and effective leadership approach that emphasizes serving others, ethical behavior, and the development of individuals. Its key characteristics—such as empathy, humility, and commitment to growth, make it particularly well-suited for sport management contexts. The benefits of servant leadership, including improved well-being, stronger team dynamics, and enhanced organizational culture, demonstrate its value in modern organizations.

In sport management, servant leadership can be applied through athlete development, effective communication, mentorship, and team-building efforts. By prioritizing people over power, sport leaders can create environments that foster success both on and off the field. Supported by recent research, servant leadership continues to emerge as a valuable framework for leadership in the sport industry.

References

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