



Goshen on Leadership

DUH! WINNING!

Thanks to Charlie Sheen we have heard this statement multiple times. Now kids are using the term, and "Duh! Winning!" has become a buzzword around many lunchrooms in corporate America where we hear it said sarcastically.

So, let's talk about *winning* and what it means to those of us in leadership positions. The dictionary defines winning as "successful, victorious," but a further look at the adjective usage reads "the action of a person, character, etc." A look at the thesaurus reveals that winning equals succeeding with great difficulty. It might be that we have overlooked the latter for the former, not understanding that winning will test our character and, it will come with great difficulty.

As leaders, we are challenged—not daily but at times hourly. In my new book, *The Power of Layered Leadership*, I share that a leader is not someone who bears a title but someone of influence. This means that each of us is daily influencing people, from our mates, to our kids, to those we engage in traffic while driving to work or at our office or place of business. Whether in person or on the phone, we each will influence a minimum of 12 people every day. As we move forward each day, we do so with a wish to win in every sphere of our lives, but how we progress is the key. As I have met and visited with outstanding leaders over the years, I have found that many possess the following characteristics:

- **Humility over pride.** True leaders, those who have earned the title, have learned that the spotlight must not be theirs but belongs to those they are leading. They have found that being boastful and full of pride destroys the spirit that must be present in order to lead others. They realize that pride precedes the fall of a man or woman. This is the *character* addressed in the adjective definition of winning. Ralph Waldo Emerson said that "Every great institution is the lengthened shadow of a single man. His *character* determines the *character* of the organization." (Emphasis mine.)
- **Servanthood over being served.** Great leaders ask "How can I serve others? What can I contribute that will make the individual or organization stronger?" They operate from a position of identifying the need of others and not from the position of greed. They are what I refer as "Doctors of Solutions," continually looking towards the solution rather than the challenge. They understand that being in a position of leadership means solving problems. I enjoyed a recent quote by General Colin Powell: "Leadership is solving problems. The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership."
- Listen well to learn well. When I share leadership principles with universities and corporations, I tell the story of the "Texas Two-Step." My wife and I moved to Texas a few years ago and we took off one weekend to an area called the Texas Hill Country. We found this very quaint town called Borne, Texas. Borne is known for having the oldest dance hall in Texas. So one night my wife and I went over to visit this unique piece of real estate to listen to a great country western band. I noticed that there were many couples just gliding around this large dance hall with great ease and precision.

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Now I am not a great dancer, but I asked my wife what type of dance that was and commented that it looked like fun. Not only did she explain that it was called the "Texas Two-Step," but within 15 minutes she had me gliding around that floor with the masses (not smoothly you understand, but still gliding). I use this story to introduce another "two-step" program based upon a principle I learned from Mr. Bill Marriott, Jr. I got to know Mr. Marriott when we served on a committee together several years ago, and I have in my library an autographed copy of his book, *The Spirit to Serve*. One of the chapters in his book is entitled "He Who Listens Well Learns Well." Mr. Marriott, along with other leaders, has learned that in order to move people forward, one must be "quick to listen and slow to speak." A leader who does not listen well risks missing critical information and losing the confidence of those he or she leads. As Mr. Marriott shares, "When you open your ears, open your mind, too. Listening should be an opportunity to learn." Or in the words of Henry David Thoreau, "It takes two to speak the truth: one to speak, and another to hear."

"Duh! Winning!" may be a buzzword that has given a degree of notoriety to a Hollywood personality, although it is likely that the term will fade from our vocabulary rather than being included in the next edition of *Webster's New World Dictionary*. But the characteristics that define winning and the people who win are timeless, and these characteristics are guaranteed to make a person successful, victorious even, if he or she is willing accept the great difficulty that brings it about.

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