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My Take on Leadership

 In my opinion, the purpose of a leader is to move a group of people from point A to point B. Whether it be completing a group project for school or serving as captain for an athletic team, leadership is about defining the end goal and coming up with a plan to reach it. The first and maybe most important part of making plan is assessing where each member’s aspirations and expectations lie. If the group does not have matching or complimentary attitudes about their goals, it will inevitably end in mass frustration. The best example I have of this was my high school cheerleading team. All the girls were adamant about wanting to make States, but I soon realized these attitudes were superficial to some. The same girls who would heave and haw about making it to the next competition were the same who wanted to cheat during conditioning. As a competitive cheerleader for an all-star program, I saw the disconnect between the ethic we needed to advance and where we were performing at that point; it caused high tensions and fights, and overall was a disappointing and exhausting season for everyone. If at the beginning of the season, the coaches and captains sat the team down and detailed what a competitive routine required of everyone, maybe we would have decided instead to focus on gamedays and building school spirit. Whether we decided to aim for States or focus on teambuilding and football games, we would have had an enjoyable season because we were on the same page.

 Another critical aspect of leadership I value is flexibility. As a leader, you need lead in a way that is best for you subordinates. At times this may be contradictory to your personal style, but a leader cannot be successful without the rest of the organization. It is much easier for one person to change than to ask multiple people to deal with your rigidity. Flexible leaders are also better equipped to handle divergent situations; they are responsive to their environment and the needs of their followers. I believe it is important to keep an open mind and look at problems from multiple perspectives. Being flexible can also mean knowing when to rely more heavily on a subordinate’ strengths rather than depend solely on your own skillset. If passing an important responsibility to a subordinate with a specific strength, it is necessary to support them in any way they need and give them credit for the work they have done.

 I try to emphasize connection and communication as a leader. I believe that creating and maintaining an open and honest relationship is necessary. Your subordinates should feel comfortable asking a question or coming to you for help. If subordinates are too afraid to reach out or discuss any problems, the leader doesn’t have a clear picture of the organization and can’t effectively work towards the team’s goal.

Finally, I believe kindness and empathy play an important role in effective leadership. Emotional intelligence is key to understanding the interactions that take place within your organization. You can then use this information to alter the organization’s environment so that people can work to the best of their abilities. I also think that it is important to build a relationship with each of your subordinates. When you invest in the personal development of a subordinate, they in turn invest in you and the organization’s mission. In conclusion, I believe strong personal connections can fuel an organization’s drive and be the difference between success and failure. Being on the same page, practicing flexibility and acknowledging the feelings of your subordinates are ways you can strengthen the bonds between people and in turn strengthen the organization as a whole.