

## Leadership 101<sup>o</sup>

### What Is Leadership?

Leadership is a process of getting things done through people.

Leadership means responsibility. It's adventure and often fun, but it always means responsibility. The leader is the guy the others look to to get the job done. It means that the other Scouts expect you to take the responsibility of getting the job done. If you lead, they will do the job. If you don't, they may expect you to do the job all by yourself.

### The Job of a Leader

Every leader deals with just two things: the **job** and the **group**. **The job** is what's to be done. The "job" doesn't necessarily mean work. It could be playing a game. It could be building a skyscraper. It could be getting across an idea. A leader is needed to get the job done. If there were no job, there would be no need for a leader. **The group**, such as a patrol, is the people who do the job. And in many cases, the group continues after the job is done. This is where leading gets tough.

You can always tell when a leader succeeds, because:

1. The job gets done.
2. The group holds together.

An effective leader must be alert at all times to the reaction of the members of the group; the conditions in which he may find himself; and be aware of his own abilities and reactions.

### Setting the Example

Setting a good example will often not work all by itself. But if you exchange it for a bad example, you may get immediate action (of the wrong kind). People learn from models and examples. A leader is a model whether he wants to be or not. He doesn't have to tell the group to follow his example. In fact, he can even tell them not to follow his example, but they will. "What you are speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you say," said Emerson.

Setting an example is more than staying out of trouble. It is showing the way. Setting an example means doing the right things, and knowing why. As a leader, you are observed by others at all times. Other Scouts are watching you and learning to do what you do. Are you proud of what they see? You can set a good example by:

- Following instructions. There's at least one right way to do everything.
- Trying harder. If you'll settle for last place, so will the group. Get up earlier and run faster than anybody. They can't follow you if you are not out ahead.

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<sup>o</sup> Adapted from <http://www.pinetreeweb.com/leading-teach.htm> , February 11, 2006.

- Taking the initiative. Find out what has to happen and make it happen.
- Acting mature. If you act like a half-wit, you'll be a good model for those trying to win the half-wit badge. That's not what your group needs. You'll get a lot more respect by acting mature than by being a silly kid.
- Knowing your job. Never quit trying to do a better job. Know your group and its resources. Pick up new skills and improve on old ones. You can't learn too much about leadership.

## Communicating

Leaders both give and get information. Communication happens both ways.

To improve your skills in *getting* information, follow these rules:

- Pay attention and listen carefully.
- Make notes and sketches.
- Ask questions and repeat your understanding of what was said.

To improve your skills in *giving* information, there is a similar set of guidelines:

- Make sure the others are listening before you start giving information.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Draw diagrams and pictures and have those receiving the instructions make notes.
- Have the others repeat back their understanding of the information.

From time to time you can check yourself to see whether you are improving in the skill of getting and giving information. Ask yourself these questions:

- Are your Scouts forgetting less?
- Do they take notes regularly?
- Do they ask questions when in doubt?
- Do you take notes yourself and review them to be sure you don't forget things?

## Sharing Leadership

As a leader, you can share tasks but never share final responsibility. If you assign someone to cut the firewood, the task is his but the responsibility is yours. If he doesn't have a pile of wood ready when it's needed, you will not get off the hook by saying, "Well I gave that job to him, and it's his fault that there's no wood." If there is no wood, it's your fault. Giving the job to someone doesn't end your responsibility. It ends only when the job is done satisfactorily.

You can choose to share your leadership in several ways. At the beginning, you can allow every member to take part in planning. You have to set the limits, because some things have already been decided, but within those limits, let them plan. You can have everyone share in the responsibility for success. Everyone can have a job to do and feel a part of the team.

As leader, you have to check on everyone. When someone hasn't done his job, you have two alternatives. You could take over, or you could persuade that person to do his job. Which do you think is the right one?

There are two other ways to share leadership. One is the "iron hand," where you simply tell the group what is expected of them. This is the least desirable, but it is sometimes necessary with an inexperienced group or in the event of an emergency. Another approach is to join the group as an equal and not play any leadership role at all. This is a good style for discussion and works really well when the group has all the skills to do the job.

Good leadership -- using several styles and approaches -- will produce such results as these:

- A spirit of cooperation
- Teamwork
- A feeling on the part of each member that he is needed and wanted.

With good leadership, members of the group will continue to grow in their development as individuals because they are made to feel that they are accountable for their actions.

In your next few opportunities to lead, try using some or all of the various styles of leadership. They refer to the extent of sharing of leadership with the group, and are listed in order from the least to the most sharing:

- Directing
- Coaching
- Supporting
- Delegating (including joining)

When you have given several of these a try, then ask yourself these questions. Do you use more than one comfortably? How do you really feel about sharing leadership with the group? Do you get better results with one or more methods? How does the group react to each style of leadership you use? Can you combine styles?

## **Planning**

Planning is almost always faster and easier if you know what you are planning. More specifically, you have to know what you are trying to accomplish. So in considering the task, think about the outcomes. What do you want to happen? What will be the result? Will there be more than one desired result? If so, will they conflict?

As a plan develops, you need to consider alternates. (For instance, what would this troop have done if it turned out that some rooms held four and others six?) Have a Plan B ready in case something upsets your plan.

Finish your plan, make assignments, and write the plan down so everyone can understand it.

To plan anything, follow this course:

- Consider the task.
- Consider the resources.
- Consider alternatives.
- Reach a decision.
- Write it down and review it with the group.
- Carry out the plan.

You can use these steps in planning just about anything: a hike, teaching a skill at a troop meeting, a window display, summer camp, a service project. After a while the six steps will come to you naturally.

Improve every time you plan by evaluating what you did last time. How can you do it better? Did you use all available resources? How do you know? Were all alternatives considered? Did everyone participate? Did they enjoy it? Were they satisfied with the outcome? Did everyone understand the plan?

### **Knowing and Using the Resources of the Group**

A resource is a thing you can use. A book, a tool, a piece of wood, or a handful of sand may be a resource. People can also be resources, because:

- They know how to do things.
- They have information or knowledge.
- They know how and where to get other resources.

Every member of every group is some kind of resource. Not everyone has something to give to every job, but each member of a group should be encouraged to add what he can.

Learn the resources of each of the members of your patrol. Here are four ways:

- Through observation. You may make a lot of mistakes before you find out what resources everyone has.
- You may find out various Scouts' interests and skills by casual talk with them. Or you may hear about it from some other person. But this is also a slow way to find out what you need to know.
- You can ask questions.
- Give each member of the group a resource sheet with specific questions on it. For instance, it could read, "Check below all of the skills you think you are pretty good at: knot tying, nature lore, hiking, cooking, etc." The resource sheet might also include a suggestion that members of the group show which skills they think they could help others to learn.

### **Controlling Group Performance**

Control is not being a dictator. Rather, it is using good sense and skill to get the job done and keep the group together. Briefly stated, control consists of:

- **Observing** the group.
- **Making instructions** fit the situation.
- **Helping** where necessary.
- **Examining** the completed work.
- **Reacting** to the quality of the work.

Successful control gets the job done at the right time, at the right place, and in the right way. But more, it encourages the group to do better next time.

How will you know how successful you were? Ask yourself these questions afterward: Did the job get done on time? How do you feel about it? How do your group members feel? Did you help those who needed it? How did others react? Will the group do better because of this experience? Why?

### **Evaluating**

Everything your patrols and troop do should be evaluated. But not by you alone; let the Scouts who take part in them share their thoughts with you. But you have to be sure you understand what they're telling you. Here are some pointers that will help you understand the answers you get from the Scouts.

- *People's personal values show.* Each person sees things in his own way. The boy who loves water sports may not think much of camping on the desert. That doesn't mean he's wrong. It just helps you to understand how he evaluates 3 days on very dry land.
- *When you ask for facts you need simple answers.* This means that you will have to ask questions that will get simple answers.
- *A person seldom tells how he really feels with short answers.* If you want to know how many or how much, short answers are fine. If you want to know how people really feel, you have to give them freedom to answer. This type of question will get a simple answer: How many patrol meetings should there be every month? On the other hand, this question will not get a simple answer: Why do you think your patrol should meet once a week?
- *Some situations prevent honest answers.* When a person feels threatened, he will not evaluate honestly. The newest Scout in your troop probably will not answer questions frankly until he feels that he belongs. A newly appointed quartermaster is not going to evaluate the senior patrol leader's (SPL) recommendation too critically until they have worked together for a time and he has become better acquainted with the job.

Remember:

- *You can't stay on the track unless you know where you are going and then evaluate what you are doing successfully to get there.*
- *Find out from others how you are doing. Don't just trust your own judgment.*
- *Be sure you know what you are asking.*
- *Be sure you know what they're telling you.*

### **Representing the Group**

You can't represent a group unless you know what they think. And you can't know what they think unless you ask them. Here are some suggestions for asking:

- Get the facts. Do you understand what they're telling you? Do they understand what they're being asked about?
- Analyze the situation. If there's a problem, can it be handled inside the group? Or must other leaders be brought in?
- Get the group's reaction. If all feel the same way, fine. If there's a difference of opinion, find out all sides of it.
- Take notes. You can't remember all details long enough to represent the group. Write them down. Read them back to the group to be sure you haven't left out anything.

Get all the information, opinions, and ideas of your group before speaking for it. When you do:

- Give the facts. If there are different points of view, state them. Give the reason for them. Present them so fairly that no one will know which side you favor.
- Respect their opinions. Your group may all agree on something. Other groups may agree on the opposite. Listen to what they have to say. They may have information your group did not know about.
- Represent some things in private. When there's some personality problem in your group, present it to one or two leaders. Don't hang it out for everyone to see.
- Take notes. You will have to report back to your group. They will want to know what happened and why. Write it down so you won't forget anything.