

WHAT IS A LEADER?

Good leadership is important for the survival of Square Dancing.

By Jeff Garbutt

Leadership is one of those human qualities that we often talk about, but sometimes don't really understand. Much has been written about leadership, covering subjects such as - what makes someone a leader, how to lead, leadership styles, and the list of subjects goes on. But exactly what is a leader ?

Before answering this, I suggest that you try the following exercise:

- Build up a list of well known leaders from any avenue of human endeavour and experience, both current and historical. (Include fictional as well as real if you like).
- Next try to define which particular quality of that person made/makes him/her a leader.
- Finally, try to find some common element that fits all leaders.

Chances are that you won't find any common ground. But there is the one thing that all leaders have in common is that they have followers.

So - what then is a leader ? "A leader is someone who has followers".

It's as simple as that - if you want to be a leader - first you have to gain the trust, understanding and respect of a group of followers.

So how does one become a leader ? Simple, you find some way to encourage people to follow you. And this means that you have to understand the people who follow you. You have to understand their needs, aspirations, concerns.

You have to care enough about them and their needs to be able to satisfy them - because a true leader is nothing without followers.

You may think that this is rather paradoxical - that a true leader is basically a servant of his followers. But when you think about it - it is really a win/win scenario - look after your followers - and they will look after you.

But of course people are so complex, having many different personalities, aspirations and needs. And when you start dealing with many people - you have many different combinations of personalities and needs to consider.

I guess this is what differentiates the good and bad leaders. Fortunately, there are many excellent books available on the theory of leadership - one that I recommend is "Leadership and the One Minute Manager, by Blanchard K Zigarmi P and Zigarmi D."

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