

## Welcome to Servant-Leadership at MSOE's April 2021 Roundtable

### This Month's Topic Is "Foresight"



#### **Servant-Leader Milwaukee**

*"The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: do those served grow as persons: do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived?" (Greenleaf, 1977/2002, p. 27)*

#### **Roundtable guidelines**

The Servant Leader Roundtable is a learning community. It is never intended to be a source of sales leads for products or services.

The roundtables are intended to be first-person conversations grounded in the participant's direct experiences. Practice and experience humility.

Promote mutual discussion: listen first to understand, and don't be dismissive of the input received through listening.

Keep confidentiality. The discussion of issues, ideas, and direction will not become a personal attack or return to haunt you in the future.

Share air time with others. Recognize that different individuals are more or less comfortable in groups.

Don't go off /stay off topic for long.

If you have a problem with someone, calmly and respectfully address the problem directly with them.

#### **Thought to Contemplate**

Am I seeker? A servant?

What institutions have I impacted? What institutions have impacted me?

What institutions could make the world better if they were stronger?

**From the "Things Doug Nelson is thinking about" series as he reads Robert Greenleaf's materials.**

## **Schedule:**

Noon-12:10: General announcements and Greeting

12:10 ~ 12:40: Break into groups for discussion:

Each group should be a combination of students, faculty and community members. If your group is not, please leave the break-out group and you will be reassigned.

2 Breath introduction:

Breath 1: Who are you?

Breath 2: What does your foresight indicate about your summer?

Read about your topic

Choose a student (assuming there is one) to **take notes** and **share out 1-3 takeaways** with the larger group at the end. It can be two different students if desired and there are 2 or more.

Discuss the topic

If you need help call using “ask for help.”

You will get a 60 second notification that the groups will be brought back to the big meeting.

12:40-12:50: Small group report outs/1-3 takeaways from the group (< 1 minute each)

12:50: Official Adjourn and after discussion if desired

Foresight Group 1

## **Foresight has these three components, and all three are essential:**

**Head** – Foresight requires rigorous analytical review of the past performance drivers and the current business realities. Foresight identifies potential destinations from the lessons of the past and a sound understanding of the present. However, too many leaders stop with this step.

**Heart** – Foresight requires listening carefully to the many experienced and concerned people involved in the business. Listening to your team and stakeholders is the best way to demonstrate you care about them and value their input. The people are also the best source of ideas on what destinations should be explored. When it comes time to start moving towards the destination, more people will follow the leader if their input has been given and valued.

**Gut** – Foresight requires leaders to draw on their experience, intuition and courage to call out the destination. To lead, you are expected to foresee the unforeseeable. You are expected to think about possibilities no one else has considered and then have the guts to tell the team, “We are going where no man or woman has gone before.” This is the scary, fun, and most distinctive quality of great leaders. They have the courage of their convictions and they are willing to take the personal risk to lead the team towards the vision. They defend the vision when it comes under predictable attack from those skeptics and naysayers. They inspire the people to go forward.

**Do you agree? Discuss and share with larger group at 12:40pm**

## Foresight Group 2

Here are 7 ways to cultivate foresight:

- **Diversify intentionally.** Interact with people different from you – in age, gender, race, religion, origin and worldview. Because of diverse perspectives, these folks might see things coming that you would have missed.
- **Listen deeply.** Improve your listening because every conversation might contain some hint about the future. Have you heard three people report three similar occurrences lately? Perhaps that occurrence is the harbinger of a new trend soon to be apparent.
- **Read widely.** Yes, it’s good to have deep expertise. Look for trends in places unfamiliar to you. If you are in the nonprofit sector, read *The Wall Street Journal*; if you work on Wall Street, read *The Nonprofit Times*.
- **Think systemically.** Within a system, an action in the present usually causes a reaction in the future. So, good servant-leaders hone their skills in “systems thinking” so they can better foresee the future, especially the likely consequences of their decisions, allowing them to create the future rather than react to it.
- **Predict habitually.** Build your predictive muscles, so to speak, by making regular and well-considered predictions, then testing them against reality. If you can, make it a group exercise by

getting your team to join you for predictions of emerging trends or important events in your business.

- **Network constantly.** The wider a radio telescope's antenna is spread, the farther into space it can hear. The wider a servant-leader's network is spread, the farther into the future it can hear.
- **Live technologically.** Trace human history since the industrial revolution and see how technology forms the future. Like it or not, to improve our foresight we must stay abreast of changes in the technology.

What do you think? Are there other ways you can suggest to cultivate foresight?  
Discuss and share with large group at 12:40pm

### Foresight Group 3

***“The failure or refusal of a leader to foresee may be viewed as an ethical failure.”***

Greenleaf explains it in this way. If the leader fails to foresee the right destination for the enterprise or workgroup, it causes great harm. Missing goals is miserable for the people involved. Lack of a destination with a plan to get there results in harm: stalled careers, bad morale, missed bonus checks, and lost jobs. Leaders, by position, are the stewards of people and resources. If they lead the team to poor performance, they have contributed harm. Harm to the people, when it can be avoided, is unethical behavior.

The second reason foresight is an ethical matter is simple. It is the leader's job. Leaders who fail to give the organization a destination are essentially guilty of malpractice. Nonetheless, we see leaders routinely fail to call out a clear destination. The organization moves forward in a chaotic, directionless state. People chose the wrong activities because there is no filter to discern the vital few activities that would have the best chance of success. The stumbling, unguided team loses capability and confidence to perform. The results disappoint.

**Is failure to foresee an ethical matter? Discuss and share with group and report back to the larger group.**