Leaders are different! They lead by serving others before serving themselves.

Leadership character is the primary driver of what leaders do. Leadership emerges from within and is based upon character. When leaders fail to thrive, it is because of a lack of character, not a lack of skills. When leaders succeed, it is a result of their character shining through deeds of service to others.

Thinking of others first is what separates the best leaders, servant leaders, from others. Servant leaders constantly work to help others succeed and grow. Focusing on the needs of others, rather than on their own position or achievements, is a hallmark of the servant leader.

Servant leadership is an approach to leadership that is contrary to the traditional leadership model that focuses on the person, achievements, and accomplishments of the leader. Servant leaders focus on those they serve. They do not ask what others can do for them; instead, they focus on what they can do for others.

Serving others first is a radical change in focus and orientation. Servant leaders leverage all the capabilities of every person in the organization. They make decisions based on what is best for the organization and for the people involved, rather than just on what is best for themselves.

Putting others first is not primarily anything leaders do; it is simply how great leaders think.

As you develop the servant leader character trait of “Thinking of Others First,” consider doing the following:

- Pursue intentional relationships with proven and trustworthy servant leaders. Watch how they act, and figure out how they think. Your mother was right! You do become like the people with whom you associate.

- Ask yourself: “What would great servant leaders do?” After time, you will feel your heart changing, and you will not need to question as often. The more you lead with your heart, the stronger your heart will become.

- Just do it! Look for ways to serve others, and you will begin to see opportunities all around.

Servant leaders don’t stop thinking of themselves; they just think of themselves less.

Cultivate those traits to be a better spouse, parent, and leader. Be you! Think of others first!

Dan Schmeling was a teacher and a principal. He came to NTCC as a volunteer and now helps area workers improve their job skills.
Rev. Kirthell Roberts has been the senior pastor of Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Mt. Pleasant since 1984. He is also the moderator of Cypress Baptist Association and the president of the Mt. Pleasant Ministers Union. He served as a USDA Soil Scientist for many years before recently retiring. Rev. Roberts met with Leadership Focus to share some perspectives on leadership.

Leadership Focus: Who first challenged you to become a leader?
Kirthell Roberts: There were two. Blake E. Lovelace Jr., an area manager in the Soil Conservation Service, saw leadership potential in me and encouraged me to grow. The late Rev. Meyers Brooks, of Gilmer, inspired me to seek the greatest level of service as a pastor.

LF: What leadership book do you recommend to emerging leaders?

LF: What counsel do you give to emerging leaders?
KR: Know yourself, seek good counsel, be prepared through study, and stay humble.

LF: Which leader do you admire?
KR: I hold in high esteem the noted former pastor, preacher, and lecturer Dr. Gardner C. Taylor. He is pastor emeritus of the historic Concord Baptist Church in Brooklyn, New York.

LF: What phrase best describes your personal leadership style?
KR: “Humility with a vision”

Remembering Leadercast 2013

Sanya Richards-Ross

Sanya Richards-Ross, Jamaica-born, University of Texas runner, and U. S. Olympian, is a winner:
• 2012 Olympics – double gold - 400m and 4x400m relay
• 2012 U.S. Nat’l Outdoor and World Indoor Champion - 400m
• Most sub-50 seconds 400 meter races in history - currently 45
• World Female Athlete of the Year – 2006, 2009

“I want to be an Olympic champion,” Sanya wrote when she was nine. She ruled the track in high school, but then suffered her first injury. Her father shared Aristotle’s truth: “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” She began a daily regimen of 1000 sit-ups.

Richards was the favorite at the 2008 Olympic 400m race, but she took third. She said, “Failure is the bitter ingredient in the recipe for success.” She described her jitters at the 2012 London Olympics and the huge deficit she faced during the 4x400m relay. She won the race in the last 50m.

Richards-Ross warns that there will always be “noise” during the race or quest, and that may distract us from reaching our goals. She reminds leaders to “find the center,” or manage the distractions and focus on the goal. She challenges emerging leaders, “To experience greatness, you will experience failure, but failure is temporary. Giving up is permanent!” Leaders do not give up.

Off the track, Sanya leads a full life. She continues to compete internationally, is married to NFL cornerback Aaron Ross, owns a business, and recently starred in a television series.
“Leadership is seeing beyond the status quo to what could be and then motivating others to see the same. It is having the will and the fortitude to inspire others to reach their greatest potential while not seeking self-elevation.”

– Kirthell Roberts, Pastor, Mt. Olive Baptist Church

“A perk to striving to be the best in one area is that the desire to be great often spills over into other areas of your life.”

– Sanya Richards-Ross, Olympic gold medalist

The Barna Group studied the influence of technology in families and recently released a new digital report, “The Family and Technology Report,” available on their website. Leaders may ponder these three findings:

1. Parents are just as dependent on technology as are their teens and tweens.
2. Most family members feel that technology has a positive influence on their families.
3. Very few adults or youth take breaks from technology.

“Ask The Staff
“How Do I Lead When I’m on My Knees?”

Author James Michener once said, “Character consists of what you do on the third and fourth tries.” Michener, known for investing 12-15 hours per day for several years to research, write, and rewrite his novels, certainly experienced dark times of failure, self-doubt, and rejection. Millions of readers are glad that Mr. Michener did not quit when he was down.

The character from the “Rocky” movies also spent time on his knees and flat on his back after hard blows. He said, “It ain’t about how hard you hit. It’s about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward; how much you can take and keep moving forward.” Rocky only knew one way to move: forward.

What knocks out great leaders? Life produces hard hits from the economy, health, and unexpected surprises, and leaders sometimes fall to their knees. Great leaders get back up, take the punches, protect their teams, learn the lessons, and move forward. Most of the blows leaders face, however, are self-inflicted because of lack of character. Greed, arrogance, selfishness, and isolation destroy once-great leaders and cause them to fall and stay down.

Be aware of hits coming from the outside. Gather your resources to ward off the blows and keep moving forward. If you see hits are coming from the inside—from your own lack of character—step out of the battle and deal with the decay. Others are counting on you.

“A perk to striving to be the best in one area is that the desire to be great often spills over into other areas of your life.”

– Sanya Richards-Ross, Olympic gold medalist

Website Recommendation

www.barna.org

By Sue Farr

Facts are my friends. As a student of history, I value honest research into social, ethical, cross-cultural, and inter-generational issues. The Barna Group does excellent research, and their website provides resources focused on the intersection of faith and culture. Barna Research Group was founded in 1984 by George Barna. David Kinnaman, author of You Lost Me and unChristian, currently serves as the president and spokesman of Barna Group.

A recent Barna Group survey of Christian adults shows that 58% identify themselves as leaders, but 82% indicated that they believe the United States is facing leadership crises “because there aren’t enough leaders.” They also said that their self-identified leadership qualities “do not line up with the leadership qualities they expect in others.” There is a real break between self-awareness (personal responsibility, growth, and development) and effective leadership in the trenches.

I encourage you to consult the website often so that you can lead effectively in the murkiness. Facts really are our friends.

Sue Farr was a city planner, a history teacher, and a home educator. She now creates dollhouse miniatures, grows roses, and helps leaders grow.
Picture this scenario: Grumbling is the norm. Strife is common. Morale is abysmal. Complacency is rampant. Productivity is low. Trust is absent. Relationships are toxic. Everyone complains to you, the leader, but you have no idea what to do or who to ask. Does this sound familiar?

Millions of leaders have discovered practical answers and real hope about seemingly hopeless situations by applying principles in Dr. Henry Cloud’s book *Necessary Endings* (Harper Business, 2010). Dr. Cloud, a psychologist and leadership development consultant, describes necessary endings as “the employees, businesses, and relationships that all of us have to give up in order to move forward.”

Dave Ramsey, author and financial coach, wrote, “If you’re hesitant to pull the trigger when things obviously aren’t working out, *Necessary Endings* may be the most important book you read all year.”

Many plants, including rose bushes, cannot reach their full potential without receiving intentional pruning. Gardeners cut off branches and buds that fall into one of three categories:

- Healthy buds or branches that are only average, but are not the best,
- Sick buds or branches that cannot get well, no matter how many resources they receive, and
- Dead buds or branches that are taking up space.

This “pruning” concept also applies to personal life and to business. Necessary endings of activities and relationships allow leaders to have resources and margin to invest in the best.

**Leadership Book Review**

*Necessary Endings* by Dr. Henry Cloud

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**Leadercast 2014 Update**

*Partners in Leadership: NTCC and TAMU-T*

We welcome our most recent Leadercast Northeast Texas partner, Texas A&M University-Texarkana. Dr. Glenda Ballard, Dean of College of Education and Liberal Arts, said, “The addition of Leadercast was a natural fit” because of the partnership A&M-Texarkana has with Northeast Texas Community College. “It is the goal of both NTCC and TAMU-T to create leaders for the greater northeast Texas region, and this is one more effort to insure we provide the most comprehensive and up-to-date information to our constituents.” Dean Ballard has asked Kelly Coke, TAMU-T’s Instructor of Adult Education and Leadership, to serve A&M-Texarkana’s liaison to the 2014 Leadercast Northeast Texas.

According to Dr. Kevin Rose, Leadercast Northeast Event Lead, “Kelly has already jumped in with both feet; serving on the event steering team and coordinating the event’s hospitality committee.” It is exciting to see how Leadership Northeast is growing, and how even more individuals will be able to take advantage of an event designed to “create leaders worth following.”