

**My Personal Leadership Autobiography**

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Over the course of my professional career, my leadership style has changed and adapted to grow into the leader that I am today. I have worked in many leadership and management roles throughout my career and before my career. From having a leadership role in high school clubs, to being the section leader for the Old Dominion University marching band, to being the Assistant General Manager of a restaurant, I have learned different skills and tools that I have worked to refine to improve myself as a professional. I have met and worked with many people that have influenced me and my views on leadership, some for the better and some for the worse. Both in and out of a work setting, I have refined what works for me and what I have felt that people respond to. I have also had to discover the differences between management and leadership. I have worked in both settings, and I have learned some key differences and how to be the best version of myself. In this paper I will discuss my views on leadership and management, how I have grown and changed, and how different people in my life have influenced my style.

Leadership and management can go hand in hand but do have some key differences. Leadership is more about creating new ideas and goals. It is working with a team and getting them to be on the same page to reach those goals. A strong leader is someone who can inspire those around them to be the best version of themselves. They are also someone who can adapt to changes and work with a team to make the changes to best reach a goal. A manager should be working with the leader to meet the goals. They are someone who sets tasks and day to day operations to reach the goals of the team. The manager should be organized and a good communicator, to work with people to get the daily tasks done. They are someone who looks more toward the short term, whereas the leader looks more toward the long term. I believe that the key aspect to both roles, however, is coming together to reach the goals of the company. The

leader needs to be able to communicate with the manager to let them know the goals and values that they want to pursue, and the manager needs to be able to communicate the progress that is being made. Through all of this, they should come together and change policies and procedures as needed to be the most productive and successful.

Over my professional career, I have adapted to different styles to fit what I needed at the time. I have always been a more reserved and shyer person. When I first gained even a little bit of leadership roles, I was very nervous. I have always had a strong passion for what I was doing and that is what drove me to want to be a leader. I think that is one thing that has remained consistent in my career. I have always strived to have a passion about what I was doing, and it led to more opportunities. I was always more of the lead by example and a quiet leader type. I believe my first small leadership role was in high school band as a section leader. I gained some confidence sharing my ideas and trying new things. I tried to really have my joy for band and to be better to be the driving force. After high school I had more opportunities for leadership including being a section leader for the ODU band. This was a much bigger scale than I was used to. I had to talk in front of much larger groups, be more confident, and a little louder. I remember having to put out more fires and having to really police people more. This was my first experience with having to really manage a large group of people, and it definitely was not my favorite part. I needed more than just the lead by example tactics that I was used to. I was trying to find a balance between trying to be nice and have fun, but also not having everyone walk over me and take advantage. This is something that I am still struggling with today.

I decided to take a break from university, and I moved back home to start working. At this point I started waiting tables and moved my way up to management. I gained confidence serving for a few years and really tried to learn everything that I could about the business and the

specific place that I was at. At my current job now, I started as a server, and I was a part of the opening team. I then was promoted to a head server where I was basically a shift lead. This role was mostly a manager type role as apposed to a leadership position. In this I had to find a balance of having to work with my peers and having that role of authority. I struggled a little trying to find my voice. I tried keeping up with the lead by example style of leadership. I felt that if I was performing the tasks that I needed to and following all my steps, then I would have a much easier time of getting someone else to do them as well. No one wants to follow someone that does not practice what they preach. I really kept up with this and felt like I gained the respect of my peers as well as the upper management, until I was eventually promoted again to a full-time manager. When I started this position, I was once again very nervous. Not only would I have to deal with the employees, but also the guests at this point. The biggest thing that I tried to do in this case was to keep organized and to really remember what it was like to be a staff member. I really tried to relate to the staff and have some empathy with everything. I gained more respect from everyone by trying to be helpful and empathetic to the situation. In addition, though, I really had to learn how to be stern and concise. My hardest thing was to learn to keep people accountable and not just do things myself. I would shy away from the confrontation of getting people to complete the tasks that I would assign them.

Some of the current attributes that I stive for each time are keeping organized and task oriented. I try and make sure that I write down as much as I can to keep on task. I also try to keep the passion that I have for the restaurant. I truly love working where I am, so I use that passion to drive me to try and create new ideas and opportunities. I try and work with the kitchen to help create specials, or work with the bar to up the bar game, and I work with the serving staff to make sure that we are keeping a high level of service. There are some days where I am less

enthused, but I really try to keep a positive face and encourage a better work environment. I believe that the best productivity happens when people are genuinely happy to be there and have a good relationship with the management.

Throughout my career there have been many people that have influenced me in my leadership style. Some of them were not as positive, but really made me realize what I wanted in a manager. My first serving job was at a restaurant that had a bad and somewhat abusive owner. He had no empathy for any of the staff and would constantly yell at us and berede us in front of guests and employees. That experience really helped me to see what I don't want in a manager. I also saw that the staff was not receptive to it and the service and workflow was down because of it. I know personally I did not do my best work there, and I believe most of that was because of him. My current job the owner is the complete opposite. She is extremely encouraging and really takes the time to coach us and help us grow. We constantly have sit downs and learning opportunities to help us improve as managers. She has also given us books and materials to read and discuss to help us learn. I have really been able to see what a good manager and leader of a restaurant is supposed to look like, and I have been able to model myself around that. I have tried to emulate her, but also bring my own style and still into the mix.

Overall, I feel that I have really grown into a leader. I have come a very long way since that first small taste of leadership that I had. I still, however, have a lot that I can grow and improve on. I still need to work on being more assertive and more of a vocal leader. I also need to work on remaining a little calmer in tense situations and keeping my stress levels down. I am hoping this this class, and the leadership major will help me to home in on my skills, enhance the ones that I have, and build new ones.