

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

Adapted from *Greek Leadership Resource Manual*, University of Maryland, College Park

The strength of a good leader requires good human relations and understanding in dealing with people. As a leader, you must find a balance between developing respect and demonstrating caring and understanding. Here are some tips on positive leadership:

Praise

Praise encourages people to perform productively and increases job satisfaction tremendously. But, it's important for leaders to use praise constructively. Praise for the sheer sake of complimenting someone is an ineffective means of encouraging performance; it may even come across as patronizing. Keep your praise under control, and direct it at a person's performance. Combine private encouragement with public recognition of a person's achievement.

Criticism

Criticism can also bring about better performance in people, but a great deal of tact is required. In using criticism, be sure that you understand the situation first. It may not be the way it appears! Ask the other person to explain his/her behavior, and, above all, avoid arguments--arguments are not constructive. To be an effective critic, try to be straightforward, always direct criticism at a behavior or an approach used rather than at the person, and criticize privately.

Admitting mistakes

It's hard to admit you're wrong, especially when you are in a position of authority. But the best leaders make plenty of mistakes. Generally, leaders are admired for frankness and openness in recognizing their errors. Remember that mistakes help us learn and improve as individuals. Admitting mistakes reflects positive leadership and will help build strong relationships with your chapter's members.

Motivation

Encouragement and support are important elements of the art of motivating. It's important to make people in your organization want to do things without "forcing," "driving," or "selling." The subtle, skilled process of motivation requires that you know what motivates each individual and what the basic needs of members of groups are, such as:

- **The need for a sense of belonging.** (To feel that you are sincerely welcome and needed in the group.)

- **The need to share in planning group goals.** (To be able to express ideas and concerns and to help set the direction for the organization.)
- **The need to feel that goals are attainable.** (To understand and feel competent to work toward goals.)
- **The need to contribute to human welfare.** (To feel that what you're doing in the group is of value that extends beyond the group.)
- **The need to share in making rules for the group.** (To play a part in establishing standards, policies, and procedures that will help the group live and work together.)
- **The need to know what is expected of you.** (Expectations should be clearly stated, so you can work confidently.)
- **The need to be challenged.** (Responsibilities should build skills and help you reach personal goals.)
- **The need to see that progress is being-made.** (You want to feel a sense of achievement in reaching goals.)
- **The need to keep informed.** (You need to know what's going on around you--to be kept "up on things.")
- **The need to have confidence in the leader.** (Confidence is based on assurance of consistent fair treatment, of recognition when it is due, and trust that loyalty will bring increased security.)

Listening

The best way to learn about those you serve is to be a good listener. Good listening makes people feel needed and appreciated. Some tips: Never dominate a conversation or a meeting, unless for a good reason. When talking with someone, always give the other person the "right of way." Remember, it takes time to draw people out.

Delegating Responsibility

Delegating means sharing authority, not just assigning tasks. A good leader demonstrates trust and confidence in others by encouraging them to take on increasing amounts of responsibility. The leader who insists on keeping "a finger in every pot" discourages member participation by competing with members.

Recognition

A good leader gives credit where it is due. Giving people recognition for what they have done has a double kick: they get credit for doing the job and the leader gets credit for building an outstanding organization.

Goal Setting

People need to know where they're going, what they're doing, and why they're doing it, in order to plan their course intelligently and work efficiently. A leader has responsibility for involving members in setting organizational goals and relating them to personal and long-term goals. When planning programs or activities, let your members in on your plans in the early stages; ask for input. Remember, some of your members' ideas may improve on your own--so draw on them before it's too late.

Leadership Style

Never forget that the leader sets the style for his or her organization. If you are late for appointments, careless about facts, bored in attitude, your members will be, too. "Practice what you preach," and be consistent in your actions and reactions.

BASED ON L. E. Moody (1971). "Getting Things Done With People." American Humanities Foundation.