



Problems With the Servant Leadership Model

- Sampson Quain

One of the most crucial aspects of running a business is choosing an effective leadership model to help ensure success. The servant leadership model has become an increasingly popular choice in recent years because it focuses on meeting the needs of employees and empowering them to do their best work. First developed by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970, the model rejects the traditional authoritarian stance of most business structures in favor of business owners who are empathetic and responsive to employee needs and are interested in both personal and professional growth. In a management setting, managers delegate tasks and provide constant support to team members through research, gathering supplies and continuing education. Before adopting this style, however, it's important to understand the limitations of servant leadership.

Works Against Traditional Authority

One of the most obvious limitations of servant leadership is that leaders must be willing to give up absolute authority. This goes against the traditional workplace structure in which CEOs make all the decisions, communicate those decisions to subordinates, and receive credit when those decisions are implemented by the rank-and-file. One of the problems with servant leadership is that leaders must sublimate their egos. Servant leadership is all about giving credit to employees to help them exceed performance standards. It's difficult to find business owners willing to act selflessly in their pursuit of success, which is one of the servant leadership disadvantages.

Makes Employees Less Motivated

Another problem with servant leadership is that it may make employees less motivated, and they then produce poorer results over time. Servant leaders are naturally inclined to step in and fix problems when they occur, and this may include finishing a task that an employee failed to complete. But the more times a servant leader comes to the rescue, the less motivation this gives employees to work hard. When employees believe their manager will step in to take care of any needs they have or to resolve issues that arise, they are more tempted to sit back and exert less effort in their daily tasks. A loss of motivation and productivity is one of the major limitations of servant leadership.

Decreases Managerial Authority

You can't discuss servant leadership disadvantages without acknowledging that putting the needs of your employees first can lead to a minimization of the authority of the overall management function in your business. When employees see their managers catering to their needs in an extreme manner, they are less likely to view those managers as authoritative figures. Moreover, when senior management wants middle and low-level managers to push employees to achieve better performance, it becomes challenging for servant managers to step back into a more dominant role. Business leaders can't simply model empathy and understanding without also trying to establish some type of authority that establishes the distinction between boss and employee.

There are other problems with servant leadership, namely the fact that one size doesn't fit all. In other words, not every business benefits from this type of approach. Establishing a successful servant leadership system takes time, because it requires a commitment to developing your staff and promoting personal and professional growth. Businesses that are undergoing changes in the work culture will not respond well to servant leadership because the lack of stability makes it difficult for managers to implement this system. This is especially true when well-meaning managers worry more about the feelings of their employees rather than their needs. When managers care too much about hurting an employee's feelings, they tend to be reluctant to make difficult decisions or to provide honest critiques of job performance. Business owners must take a hard look at their organizational structure to determine if these servant leadership disadvantages are worth the benefits of this approach.

SOURCES:

<https://smallbusiness.chron.com/concept-empowerment-leadership-15371.html>