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A Publication
for the Collegiate
Chapters

What the Years Have Taught Me

Be the Good Leader

by Robert C. Rogers, P.E., Ohio Delta '89

What makes a good leader? Does one work to become a leader, or is leadership instilled at birth? Good question. The answers can be very subjective. There are books, courses, and journal papers, all offering lessons in how to be a leader. One could spend so much time reading about how to become a leader that there would be little time left to lead.

The years have taught me that leadership involves a melding of knowledge and inherent personal traits. Is this to say that one cannot *learn* to be a leader because it involves inherent personal traits? No. One can *learn* to lead, just as one can *change* as a person. However, when someone also has knowledge, inherent personal qualities, and a few other traits, the difference between an *effective* leader and a *great* leader is readily apparent.



“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do.”

—Mark Twain

By now, the reader may wonder why I feel qualified to expound on the issue of leadership and attempt to define how it is manifested within an individual.

My leadership experience began in grade school and continued into high school in both athletic (basketball captain) and academic (class officer, American Legion Boys State) endeavors. New opportunities to lead arose through my collegiate years, professional years, and through my association with the United States military (naval construction forces, otherwise known as the Navy Seabees).

I have made my fair share of mistakes along the way, but was fortunate enough to be exposed to a few individuals who dramatically increased my understanding of what defines a leader. These few individuals instilled in me and others the desire to do our best and garnered loyalty beyond measure.

Conversely, I was exposed to many individuals who were in positions of leadership, but were not good leaders.

I have worked for various companies ranging from a large corporation with hundreds of thousands of employees to small firms comprised of only 20 to 30 people. Many of these companies offered continuous leadership training and urged leaders to read as many management and leadership books as possible.

My experiences working in many different professional settings, with different management styles and philosophies, has helped me define what leadership is and what it *is not*.



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I believe that true leadership ability is attained by combining learned skills with specific personal characteristics.

Personal Characteristics

The most important characteristic to possess in a leadership role is *honesty*. The ability to lead effectively quickly disappears when others cannot trust



*“No legacy is so rich
as honesty.”*

—William
Shakespeare

what they are being told. Even world leaders have been marginalized by violating this founding pillar of leadership. The popular management phraseology “Walk the talk” is totally meaningless if the talk is hollow and not true or honest. Companies can become laughable when grandiose statements are made by their leaders (or sometimes their managers), but who then fail to follow through. Not only must the leader be honest, he or she must make sure that this basic tenet of leadership is shared and implemented at all management levels. Part of that depends on those selected to be part of the leader’s team; but more on that later.

The honesty discussed herein should usually be tempered with a degree of diplomacy, although in rare instances, *brutal* honesty may be necessary. I firmly believe that honesty, in whatever form (brutal or diplomatic), must flow from a heart that clearly takes no joy in hurting or degrading others, regardless of the circumstances. Honesty will surely benefit others and the company if it is borne from a heart of compassion.

There are those who may enjoy creating circumstances through which an individual or group “gets what it deserves,” so to speak. But a leader, at his or her core, must take no joy when employing honesty to correct situations for the betterment of others or the company.

Thus, honesty must be combined with another basic tenet of leadership—a caring heart, otherwise popularly known as *compassion*.

A leader must be cognizant that the whole of a person, not just the profes-

sional persona, must be *led*. Leading means knowing that connecting with the *whole* of a person, or group of people, on a basic level is essential.

There are certain aspirations that we all share as human beings. Showing compassion regarding these aspirations is critical for the success of a leader. The aspiration can take many forms such as:

- we all want to be loved,
- we all want to be admired, and
- we all want to feel good about who we are.

Connecting with people on this level is crucial for real leadership. I believe that the ability to connect with people on this basic level is commonly referred to as *charisma* or *personality*, but, in essence, it is the leader’s ability to communicate to others about those basic things we share that bond us together. Being sensitive and compassionate about these common aspirations is crucial to being a successful leader.

The effective leader balances this compassion with the universal understanding that professional goals and objectives must still be achieved. The balance between compassion and meeting goals is somewhat subjective, but must be clearly observable to be fair in nature. Some may ask why a leader should strive to make the situation *observably clear* to be fair. The answer lies in the perceived *fairness* of the leader and his or her ability to affect morale and actively lead. When others perceive that one is always fair with people, regardless of circumstances, one’s ability to lead becomes greatly enhanced, *even among those who may disagree with a leader’s course of action*.

If a leader possesses the honesty and compassion discussed above and can combine those traits with knowledge and humility, I believe the right mixture is present for one to be an *effective* leader. It is not necessary for the leader to be the most knowledgeable person, but only that he or she possess enough knowledge to evaluate critically the counsel of others regarding the subject matter at hand.

However, unless the leader possesses sufficient humility to realize the limit of his or her knowledge or when to solicit the knowledgeable counsel of others, the leader’s potential becomes severely limited. I firmly believe that the more one learns, the more one can correctly perceive areas where one lacks sufficient knowledge. The increased ability to define one’s limit of knowledge dictates when, and how

often, counsel from others must be sought.

A word of caution here. The leader who always—and I stress *always*—needs to confer with counsel before acting will not be a great leader. The individual may be an effective leader, but will not be a *great* leader. More on what I believe constitutes a great leader later.

When counsel is sought, being surrounded by the right group of people is vital. This brings us to a point previously touched upon: those who are selected to be part of the leader’s team must also possess knowledge, compassion, honesty, and humility. I believe that an effective leader surrounds him or herself with individuals who are extremely knowledgeable about the necessary subject matter and who possess the potential to be just as effective in leading as the leader.

Thus, a key attribute of an effective leader is the ability to *evaluate another’s character* as well as another’s knowledge. Evaluation of knowledge is a much clearer course of action when compared with evaluating one’s character.

I have found that the best method to evaluate character is to observe, in a transparent manner as much as possible, another’s behavior when interacting with others. Perhaps it was best said by Samuel Johnson, “*The true measure of a man is how he treats someone who can do him absolutely no good.*” The characteristic manner of how a person treats others, regardless of the others’ status in life, is quite reflective of one’s innermost being.

I believe that by combining honesty, compassion, knowledge, and humility



*“Compassion is not
a religious business;
it is human business...”*

—the Dalai Lama

one can become a very effective leader. It is important that these traits not be confused with a lack of assertiveness on the leader’s part, which must be present as well. Truly, the ability to be assertive and commanding while em-

bodying these critical traits is a balancing act that can be perfected only with time, and mistakes will happen.

It is important that a leader be able to admit failures or mistakes, which in turn reflects the leader's humility and invokes the opportunity for compassion from others. Everyone makes mistakes; a leader's mistakes are just showcased for all to see. However, if a leader shows compassion and is connected to others on a basic level, as previously discussed, the leader can be forgiven and still be effective. So the next question becomes: what differentiates an *effective* leader from a *great* leader?

I believe what separates the effective leader from the great leader is as follows:

Passion, Communication, Energy

The great leader is one who believes deeply in the cause at hand and is passionate about its purpose. The leader is so passionate that it is intensely communicated in words and actions.

- The words and actions are so effectively communicated that others become energized to act and unite for the cause. As with leadership, there are numerous articles that present how to best communicate this passion.

- I firmly believe the *great* leader exudes this passion/energy, and, although the methods of communication can be fine-tuned and improved, the underlying passion/energy can be transmitted effectively simply by direct verbal communication.

Seeing the Best

The *great* leader sees the value/worth and the true potential of each person. The leader's actions and words stir an internal desire within each individual to do the absolute best one can. I believe this reaction is most felt when individuals observe the leader putting forth tremendous effort for the cause. One is more motivated to push one's own limits when it is readily observable that the leader is willing to move beyond his or her own comfort zone for the cause.

Taking Action

Great leaders possess an uncanny ability to choose a workable course of action when others won't or can't. Sometimes, the decision may include *not* reacting when others do. This inspired the popular phrase, "What is right is not always popular, and what is popular is not always right." I question whether the ability to *go-it-alone* in decisions is really *teachable*.

Regardless of the pressures that come to bear as the result of the action (or inaction), the great leader believes wholeheartedly in the action (or inaction), forgoes popularity, and willingly suffers all slings and arrows. These are some of the most turbulent, trying times for a leader, and many leaders are either included or excluded from the label of *great* depending upon the outcome of the action (or inaction).

Unless the leader is prepared to act (or not act) contra to all prevailing indicators and bear that ultimate responsibility, I believe he or she will never be viewed among the select class of great leaders.

Thus, the true measure of difference between an *effective* leader and a *great* leader relates to the leader's passion for

"Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide."

—Napoleon Bonaparte



the cause and what he or she is willing to do for that cause. The combination of knowledge and inherent personal traits and their relationship to leadership can be applied to almost any arena (sports, military, professional). The years have taught me that these are the fundamentals of leadership. May you find the information helpful for your development as a leader.

Robert C. Rogers, P.E., Ohio Delta '89, is a Tau Beta Pi District 7 Director and an alumnus of Ohio University, Athens, OH. He is employed as a consulting structural engineer for Steven Schaefer Associates, Inc., in Cincinnati, which was nationally ranked as the second "Best Structural Engineering Firm to Work For" by Structural Engineer magazine. He was founder of the Structural Engineers Association of Ohio and serves on various professional technical committees.

Welcome New Jersey E!

One new chapter chartered by the 2005 Convention has been installed with the initiation of its charter members this year. New Jersey Epsilon officially came into being on January 28, 2006, at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ, with Councillor **Dennis J. Tyner** as official installing officer.

This brings the number of active collegiate chapters of Tau Beta Pi to 230. The story of the installation and the harboring institution will appear in the Spring issue of THE BENT.

Educational Loan Fund

Since 1935, Tau Beta Pi has assisted student members with their financial needs while in school or with payment of their initiation fees through our Student Loan Fund. We are pleased to offer this service for student members in amounts up to \$2,500 per member.

Repayment is required to begin after three years, and a simple interest rate of 6% is charged from the day the loan is received.

Interested students can obtain promissory notes and loan applications from their chapter presidents, the website, or from national Headquarters in Knoxville, TN.

Advice: Be a N.E.R.D.

From a talk given at the Tau Beta Pi Convention, October 2005:

N: Never compromise your standards. Success achieved through inappropriate means will never bring happiness.

E: Excel at what you do. Decide now to make a difference. You are the best of the best. Don't settle for second best. Make a significant impact!

R: Remember and Respect people. Everyone deserves to be treated with kindness and respect, irrespective of title or position.

D: Do your Duty. The ability to solve problems that we develop as engineers is needed in our communities, in our schools, and in government at all levels. Also, some of the key "political" issues of tomorrow are really technical issues of critical importance (e.g., energy). We need to be involved.

—John N. Harb, Ph.D.
Brigham Young University

Seeking Distinguished Alumnus

The Distinguished Alumnus Award recognizes members who have demonstrated the ideals of Tau Beta Pi as stated in our Eligibility Code and who have fostered a spirit of liberal culture throughout their lives after their college years. Their personal qualities of excellence and leadership serve as examples so as to influence the professional careers and personal lives of our collegiate members.

Honored alumni have made exceptional efforts to demonstrate our ideals and to foster a spirit of liberal culture locally, nationally, and perhaps internationally. They have demonstrated integrity, breadth of interest, adaptability, and unselfish activity.

Awardees are chosen by a committee of national officers and invited to the Convention to receive a special plaque and to be recognized. A \$2,000 Tau Beta Pi Scholarship will be named in honor of each Distinguished Alumnus.

Any individual member or any

chapter may nominate any alumnus member or members, except a national official, for the award. There is no limit on the number of nominations. The following documentation in **four** sets must be sent to the Executive Director by April 1:

1. A one-page nomination form of biographical information and a summary of the achievements and/or contributions of the nominee exemplifying the objective of the award. (President's Book, C 32-33.)
2. A citation (one-page limit) appropriate for presentation, documenting the nominee's outstanding adherence to the Tau Beta Pi ideal of *fostering a spirit of liberal culture* in our society. It may be written by the nominating party.
3. Two letters of reference from persons (excluding the nominator(s) or sponsoring chapter president) knowledgeable about the nominee's contributions and achievements.



2005—H.V. Poor



2004—J.S. Tietjen



2003—D.D. Reneau and I.M. Jacobs



New Bent T-shirt is RADIANT!

TBPI's new T-shirt design radiates with energy. Designed by Edwin A. Guerra, *ID B '06* and picked by students at the 2005 Convention, the shirts are available in S, M, L, XL for \$16 including shipping (XXL—\$18). Order yours at:
www.tbp.org/pages/GeneralStore/Index.cfm



2006 Spring Conference Schedule

The District Program provides a vital link between the national organization and individual chapters. Each year the Directors gather students for regional conferences to provide both retiring and new officers opportunities to discuss chapter operations and to socialize. All chapters are urged to elect new officers before their District conference. New and outgoing officers are encouraged to attend.

DISTRICT	LOCATION	DATE
1	Boston, MA	Feb. 25
2	Brooklyn, NY	March 4
3	State College, PA	Feb. 11
4	Blacksburg, VA	April 8
5	Clemson, SC	April 1
6	Memphis, TN	Feb. 25
7	Columbus OH	April 8
8	South Bend, IN	April 1
9	Fayetteville, AR	March 4
10	Houston, TX	April 8
11	Minneapolis, MN	April 8
12E	Estes Park, CO	Feb. 25
12W	Pocatello, ID	March 25
13	Socorro, NM	March 4
14	Portland, OR	April 8
15/16	San Luis Obispo, CA	April 1

NEW MEMBER BENEFIT: Princeton Review/TBPI Test Preparation Discount Program

As a result of a new partnership, Princeton Review is offering verified Tau Beta Pi members and their immediate families (including children):

- 10% discount on any Princeton Review classroom course (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, MCAT, SAT, or ACT)
- \$100 off any *Online* or *LiveOnline* course (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, SAT, or ACT).

Enroll online at: www.tbp.org/pages/ForMembers/Index.cfm.

For information about courses, call 800/273-8439.

**The
Princeton
Review**

Seeking Inaugural TBPi-McDonald Mentor Nominees

Marion and Capers (*North Carolina Gamma '74*) McDonald and the Association have established an annual award to celebrate excellence in mentoring and advising among Tau Beta Pi educators and engineers who have consistently supported the personal and professional development of their students and colleagues as excellent mentors or advisors.

Serving as engineering educators or as professionals in industry, government, or service organizations, these TBPi mentors have contributed diversely to our engineering community, serving as effective advocates and guides in both professional and administrative matters. They have shown true concern for the individual, supporting an environment for developing talents, and have earned respect and recognition for their contributions to their field and to the greater community.

The recipient of the Tau Beta Pi-McDonald Mentoring Award will be chosen by a committee of national

officials appointed by the Executive Council and will be invited to the Convention for presentation of a special medallion and a \$2,000 award (\$1,000 to honoree and \$1,000 to the nominating chapter—if nominated by a chapter—or to the honoree's chapter—if nominated by a member). The honoree will receive appropriate travel expenses, not to exceed \$1,000, to attend. Only one award will be presented in any year.

Any chapter or member of Tau Beta Pi may nominate one (or more) alumnus member(s) for the award. The nomination in four sets shall be made to the Executive Director by April 1 annually. The documentation required is:

1) A one-page summary of achievements and/or contributions of the nominee exemplifying the objective of the award.

2) Two letters of reference from persons other than the nominating party or the sponsoring chapter president who are familiar with the nominee's contributions and achievements, i.e. the dean



Each honoree will receive a Tau Beta Pi-McDonald Mentoring Award Medallion.

Honor Cords Available

Tau Beta Pi honor cords, chosen by the 2004 Convention, are available to complement the beautiful graduation stoles. Order your supply in quantities of five or more online from the General Store to obtain a discount price of \$11, down from the normal price of \$15.

Find Speakers or New Advisors with AlumNet

Tau Beta Pi's AlumNet Program was created to pair students with alumni for the sharing of information about jobs and academe. The service has been expanded, and chapters can now use AlumNet to find potential chapter advisors and speakers. More than 100 alumni have already indicated a willingness to serve as an advisor. To get in touch with an alumnus about a certain field, company, institution, or chapter

assistance, simply register online at www.tbp.org. Click on the AlumNet link under "For Members" and follow instructions.

Complete the brief contact request form, and the necessary alumnus-contact information will be sent to you by email from the program coordinator. It is the student's responsibility to follow-up and to make contact with the alumnus.

2006 Chapter Anniversaries

100th

Illinois Beta	April 6, 1906	Illinois Institute of Technology
New York Beta	May 16, 1906	Syracuse University
Michigan Gamma	June 14, 1906	University of Michigan

50th

Missouri Beta	December 21, 1906	University of Missouri-Rolla
Massachusetts Zeta	January 7, 1956	University of Massachusetts at Amherst
District of Columbia Alpha	March 10, 1956	Howard University

25th

California Zeta	April 21, 1956	Santa Clara University
California Sigma	January 24, 1981	University of California, Santa Barbara
Arizona Gamma	March 7, 1981	Northern Arizona University
South Carolina Gamma	March 28, 1981	The Citadel



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Important Deadlines

- **MARCH 1** Scholarship Application
- **APRIL 1** Constitutional Ballot
 Laureate,
 Outstanding Advisor,
 McDonald Mentor, and
 Distinguished Alumnus
 Nomination
- **JUNE 1** GIG Project Proposal
 Convention Bid for 2008
 and 2009
 Bylaws Curriculum Appeal

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National Headquarters
 508 Dougherty Engineering Building, UT
 P.O. Box 2697
 Knoxville, TN 37901-2697
 Telephone: 865/ 546-4578
 FAX: 865/ 546-4579
 Email: tbp@tbp.org
www.tbp.org

Executive Director & Editor: James D. Froula, P.E.,
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Special Benefits for Members

TBPI members can access these benefits via www.tbp.org/pages/ForMembers:

- **AlumNet**—online student/alumnus mentoring service.
- **Answer Financial**—find the best rates for many types of insurance through this free quoting service.
- **Engineering Futures**—sessions on people skills for engineering students.
- **Fellowships/Scholarships/Laureate Awards.**
- **Kaplan**—30% discounts on FE/EIT & PE examination preparation materials.
- **MonsterTrak**—student-oriented job service.
- **My Home Benefits**—real-estate and moving services.
- **Princeton Review**—discounts for courses (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, MCAT, SAT, or ACT).
- **Student Loans**—for educational and initiation-fee assistance.
- **The Best People Job Connection**—employment service connecting top people with top engineering companies.