

UNDERSTANDING PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS

GOAL: PRESENT, CONTRAST, AND CLARIFY THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LEADERSHIP, PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP, AND NEGATIVE VERSUS POSITIVE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS.

No one said being a Presidential Leader of a group/board was easy—just that it is academically known as a person who can be CALM, SERIOUS, RESPECTED, AND A PURVEYOR OF HARMONY beyond just the behavior of a so-called leader. Leadership responsibilities can be very difficult, challenging, and even rewarding! Know this: A Presidential Leader's expectations and skills are paramount to the success of any corporation, organization, or association entity!

The main questions that help identify an effective Presidential Leader are:

1. Who has the ability and experience to perform such a daunting task as a Presidential Leader?
2. What behaviors represent a competent and effective Presidential Leader?

In years of watching leadership behavior, there are overt signs of success and (unfortunately) blatant blunders in leadership behavior. While some supposed leaders attempt leadership, others seem to have exquisite in-born intuitive behaviors that demonstrate a *Presidential Leadership* profile and stance. It is easy to recognize a Presidential Leader through keen observation and witnessing leadership outcomes and successful leadership decisions. In addition, Presidential Leadership is enhanced by recognizing and appreciating constituents' unsolicited overt support and kindness toward everyone. Such recognition of positive behavior by a Presidential Leader will increase positive constituent behaviors.

Grant you, the Presidential Leadership role is not for everybody—especially if this person is not willing to listen and be calculating with forethought in the potential future constituent outcomes of group/board decisions—good or bad. Therefore, these negative behaviors or inabilities provide evidence of a person not wanting (or being competent) to be a Presidential Leader.

The Presidential Leadership role is designed for a person with abilities of positive presentation of control and positive self-discipline that some other cohorts do not seem to possess or understand. Therefore, the Presidential Leader is the person who attempts to be successful more often than other associates by knowing when to force recognition of positive and negative potential group/board decisions resulting in positive and negative outcomes. Upon recognizing the possible effects of decisions, a Presidential Leader explores democratic alternatives for the overall constituent good. During this exploratory process, consideration is given to the already established definition, philosophy, mission, goals, and objectives of the corporation, organization, or association—known as Standards that are used as a basis for decisions.

This intellectual and conforming process requires the Presidential Leader to practice the three intellectual amigos of positive decision-making:

1. Psychological Astuteness
2. Critical thinking
3. Common sense

Unfortunately, many groups/board members do not appreciate Presidential Leadership direction and guidance regardless of the person's leadership knowledge, education, experience, success in past leadership roles, or national leadership recognition--even though this direction and guidance offered to a group/board just might (*no, probably would*) increase their recognized overall success.

The expected role performed by a Presidential Leader of a group/board allows unfettered members and other approved constituent discussions, voting, unchallenged recommendations, and providing suggestions for the supposed good of constituents. Even so, this role by a group/board has its dangerous side—implying that the group/board always knows best. Common sense (one of the three intellectual leadership amigos) tells the intelligent Presidential Leader that the group/board who thinks they always know “best” might not be true! Herein lies the immense responsibility of the Presidential Leader to be the final purveyor of exceptional intellect and final approver of truth and use of common sense in all group/board decisions.

When listening to the decisions(s) of a group/board, ask yourself (as hopefully a Presidential Leader) to identify all the possible outcomes of the group/board decision(s). Be the devil's advocate by asking unpopular questions of the group/board that go beyond the obvious group/board decision(s) into the realm of current and future consequences for constituents. Such is the expected intellect and foresight expectations. Covertly consider each board member's needs and wants as you listen to their decisions. Once you understand the personal aspects of each group/board member's decision, it is uniquely easy to categorize each member based on their intellectual smartness related to their true concern for the constituents they are representing. Then, with clarity and personal understanding as a psychologically astute leader, there should be a quiet understanding of why each of the group/board members chose the decision they so adamantly presented. Was there a self-serving intention or a *constituent* goodness to their conclusion(s)? Then comes the major question as a critical-thinking Presidential Leader--What are the board's unforeseen current and future outcomes of the group/board decision(s) for all constituents represented?

It is sometimes difficult for some Presidential Leaders to be entirely supportive of group/board decisions—and often, there is just a basic human desire to be “liked”—hence, agreement occurs, regardless. Again—the role is not intended to be easy.

But know this—your supposed job description in the role of the “Presidential Leader” (or a similar-meaningful title) should suggest or state that no matter the group or board's decisions on behalf of themselves or constituents, your role (among other expectations) is to be the “final scrutinizing influence” and the “intuitive one.” This Presidential Leadership scrutiny results from leadership intelligence, experience, and the realization of potential short and long-term outcomes for constituents.

“A leader—is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the nimblest go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind.”
(Nelson Mandela)

“The very essence of leadership is that you have vision. You can’t blow an uncertain trumpet.”
(Theodore M. Hesburgh)

“The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The leader adjusts the sails.”
(John Maxwell)

RECOGNIZING POSITIVE VERSUS NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

Since most leadership articles emphasize only positive Presidential Leadership behaviors, this article presents the negative followed by the expected positive happenings and Presidential Leadership behaviors.

This duo presentation is a leadership exercise in comparative thinking! Therefore, consider what is not psychologically astute, the use of critical thinking, or the application of common sense, and then, what is true Presidential Leadership related to group/board processes. Such comparative analyses of negative and positive performance in the following section of this article demonstrate the identification of the novice and inexperienced leader from the intellectually prepared and experienced Presidential Leader who can use and will apply the three intellectual amigos (as stated above). Experiencing the negative is not ALL bad. If we do not understand the BAD, HOW WOULD WE RECOGNIZE THE GOOD? Therefore, read the following examples of recognizing the unaccomplished, unthinking, and unprepared leader—then consider a more appropriate and accomplished response for each example as a Presidential Leader. The goal is to encourage thinking, doing, and experiencing the positive outcomes of thoughtful, kind, and responsible Presidential Leadership. When a leader experiences good results in performing responsible Presidential Leadership, it is usually a natural desire to continue such positive behavior in this trusted role!

EXAMPLES OF NEGATIVE PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP HAPPENINGS VERSUS POSITIVE PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS

- Negative: No meeting agenda.
Positive: Always prepare and distribute a meeting agenda to all group/board members as a meeting pre-requisite or (at least) at the onset of a meeting. Intellectual forethought increases more appropriate and thoughtful responses.
- Negative: No existing or restating of previously approved group/board standards (Definition, Philosophy, Mission/Purpose, Long Term Goal(s), and Short-Term Objectives)
Positive: Always have previously developed group/board standards and a verbal reiteration of the standards at each meeting to prevent Entropy (a natural universal movement toward randomness and deterioration of all things and intended behaviors over time) and to give a firm, consistent direction for conversations and decisions.

- Negative: No introduction to new attendees/visitors or appreciation of attending.
Positive: At the beginning of each meeting, always introduce new attendees and group/board members to all attendees. This introduction encourages participation and cooperative intellectual and verbal exchange between those in attendance, resulting in more accurate and productive decision-making.
- Negative: No readily available recent past minutes of group/board meetings for constituents' review.
Positive: Always include group/board recent minutes to constituents with other mailings, if possible. The purpose is to communicate the effective participation of group/board members on behalf of constituents that is intended to promote positive constituent outcomes. Minutes of the most recent meeting will be approved or corrected at each ensuing meeting to enable reaffirmation and accuracy in recorded minutes.
- Negative: No pledge of allegiance at the beginning of the meeting if it is governmentally funded or related to governmental decisions and outcomes.
Positive: Always have the entire group in the room stand, face an actual or replicate of the U.S. flag, place their hands over their hearts, and in unison repeat the "Pledge of Allegiance" to the flag of the United States of America when representing the U.S. or using any governmental funds. Respect for the U.S. is a requirement of any leader or Presidential Leader accessing the money of the U.S.—including activities or personal payment for services.
- Negative: No minutes are kept, and no timely distribution occurs to constituents.
Positive: Always have a person act as documentation of minutes secretary with the expectation of time of commencement and conclusion time stated, topics identified with pro and con statements, voting numbers regarding group/board decisions, determination of final decisions, and deferred decisions to the next meeting. A future date for group/board meetings is required. Constituents (particularly paying constituents) have a right to know the actions and decisions of groups/boards on their behalf.
- Negative: Ineffective communication and listening skills. Passive aggression by ignoring a question via phone or in person related to a leadership or Presidential Leadership decision; however, finding a verbal reason to immediately end the call or conversation with no answer to the question(s). The person offers no effort or intention to find an answer or return the call.
Positive: Always attempt to answer phone inquiries correctly. If the correct answer is unknown, there is nothing wrong in saying, "I do not know." Always try, however, to find the correct answer to questions and return the phone call with the right answer. Always count on the person calling to recognize lies, attempts to escape answers and solutions, and a lack of professional courtesy.

- Negative: Placing a public notice of a constituent's disliked behavior and stating the accused person's name.

Positive: Differences in constituent opinions related to behavior or group/board decisions are best handled forthrightly with the person involved. Never—never defame a person by name in print posted in public places—unless an expensive monetary and known discrediting lawsuit of the group/board/person is desired for Defamation of Character.
- Negative: A request of a constituent, group/board member(s), or other(s) to refrain from talking (or having anything to do) with another constituent.

Positive: Present an overall respect for the constituency to select personal cohorts of their choosing. There is no place for intrusion into personal relationships! Directions to not converse with, be friends with associate with—and any other individual co-mingling behaviors, suggestions, or requirements usurp the Presidential Leadership role and have the potential for legal ramifications within the scope of Defamation of Character.
- Negative: An association, organization, or entity has numerous constituents throughout the community who are invited to attend group/board meetings in person. Due to various reasons, almost none of the constituents can/will attend board of director meetings at the time and place specified. The telephone company indicates that many constituents could access the meetings by phone in the same location/room and time of the meeting free for the association/organization/entity and person making the call. The only requirement to allow any constituent or approved constituent representative for phone participation is a phone call to the telephone company by an authorized person of the group/board at the time of the meeting commencement. However, the leader and the group/board refuse to accommodate a constituent or constituent-approved representative to attend the meeting by phone. Therefore, very few (if any) attend the board meeting or have an opportunity to hear or contribute to the discussion.

Positive: There is to be a group/board policy that respects the need for constituents to attend meetings of the group/board, attend via phone, or have an authorized representative participate in meetings in person or via phone on their (the constituent's) behalf. When/if a constituent (or any appropriate and authorized person by a constituent request) listens via phone to the meeting and appropriately contributes to the group/board meeting, the group/board should favorably consider and respond appropriately to the requests, suggestions, or comments. To refuse reasonable requests of authorized constituent representation by phone or presence in a meeting leaves a lingering suspicion of inappropriate and hidden negative group/board behavior. Covert behavior leads to overt concerns and a rise to the possibility and suggestion of group/board dishonesty, possible misuse of group/board funds, and abuse of contractual agreements with constituents. Therefore, positive group/board policy should indicate an effort to accommodate reasonable informational group/board needs of the entire constituency or authorized representative. Thus, an action of democratic and responsibility by a group/board includes an invitation to constituents or their authorized

representatives to attend meetings, access to a preliminary meeting agenda, receipt of group/board minutes, and a supportive means of hearing and participating through attending or alternative methods of the participants choice (i.e., phone, approved recording, and meeting minutes.)

- Negative: Use of a “Kitty Fund” to collect organization/association dues/funds. A Kitty Fund is an amount of money that has been collected from many constituents and put into one “pot” (“Kitty Fund”) for determined use by one or a few appointed group/board member(s). Often, there is no policy directing the allocation of funds. Funds are distributed through preferential treatment, discriminatory decisions, favoritism, and cronyism by the few who make these determinations. Therefore, funds/fees go to a select few. To acquire contractual services from a pre-determined group/board/leader, constituents are often required to threaten legal involvement, which results in personal frustration.

Positive: Appropriate and approved group/board policies are the key to the recognized appropriate distribution of “Kitty-Funds.” Proper collection and distribution of funds would include percentages of paying constituent funds to pay constituent contractual needs—often including improvements or repairs. According to a pre-determined appropriate policy, this response to constituents rewards positive behavior related to constituent compliance with assigned fees. Paying constituent funds for non-paying constituents rewards negative behavior, resulting in a continuation (and probable increase) of negative non-paying constituent behavior!

- Negative: Allowing or encouraging participation in community groups/boards by a constituent that does not fully comply with expected/required community behaviors, expectations, or assigned community fees.

Positive: Expected exemplary behavior of all participants in any community group/board as to moral, ethical, and upright behavior should be a policy requirement for consideration, placement, or continuation of a community assignment (including group/board). To require compliance with such positive expectations encourages positive behavior and supportive community behaviors.

- Negative: One person controls and manages financial decisions and has financial records in their possession.

Positive: (FYI: There are at least two situations in which, at least, two people should/must be involved in decision making and accountability—use of constituent monies and a human determination of a life-or-death decision.) Therefore, an accounting of the use or distribution of constituent funds should have an ongoing and consistent accounting by at least two people and stated so in policy or contractual agreement. Financial records must never be inappropriately manipulated. Always have a policy that requires financial records to be accessed by at least two appropriate people upon written request and under

supervision. There is to be a policy that requires a professional accounting of all funds on a regular, pre-determined, short-term basis. Never—ever--be found wanting or in error regarding the existence of a monetary accounting written policy or noncompliance to an appropriate policy meeting these strict inclusions for financial accountability!

- Negative: No job descriptions for group/board members.
Positive: Every person with an identified role within a group/board is required to perform in a certain manner. If they do not know what is expected, chaos and misplaced behaviors occur. Include in all job descriptions at least three lists—what is intellectually expected, what is to be performed or accomplished, and the attitude that is to exist during all job performances.
- Negative: Attempt and practice of corporation, organization, or association autocracy—not democracy.
Positive: Most groups/boards and other organized entities function best with a democratic leader who appreciates input, suggestions, and helpful behaviors leading to success. Suppose a supposed leader cannot function with a reasonable amount of recognized democratic behaviors on the part of a group/board. In that case, there is most often anger and dysfunction in all who attempt to participate. The democratic process (within reason) promotes cooperation and helpful outcomes for all, including the leader who seems to fear others' participation and contributions.

The question is often, “Who is to blame for such laxness and negative behaviors in the leadership role? The blame lies on a uniformed and often autocratic leader (not a Presidential Leader) who fails to have the knowledge, desire, or ability to perform the Presidential Leadership role.

“A leader takes people where they want to go. A GREAT leader takes people where they don’t necessarily want to go, but ought to be.” (Rosalynn Carter)

“The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. They are the ones who get the people to do the greatest things.” (Ronald Reagan)

MANAGING NEGATIVE GROUP/BOARD FEEDBACK

Being a leader or, by definition, a Presidential Leader of a group/board does not always produce a happy outcome! Members of the group/board may consider the concerns and suggestions to be not to their liking—especially when they do not, ultimately, get their way. It may be because their job description as members of a group or board does not make clear that their role as a group/board member is to consider closely and objectively all options when making decisions—especially when there is experientially correct objective information provided by a Presidential

Leader with more leadership education and experience as a successful leader. As per the Presidential Leader's job description, it should require the sharing of relative experiences that add a necessary perspective, enhance understanding, and ultimately maintain the reasonable maintenance of the group/board Standards (Definition, Philosophy, Mission/Purpose, Long-term Goals, and Short-Term Objectives) regardless of misdirected group/board current decisions or reactions. After all, the firm "Steady As She Goes" forwards a positive movement in support of the group/board standards, which is the role of a Presidential Leader!

The Presidential Leadership role requires a person to be the most educationally or experientially prepared in the subjects discussed and a person who can consider perspectives and potential outcomes of board decisions through a lifetime of leadership experience. Even though some group/board directors do not appreciate such scrutiny regarding a Presidential leader's contributions and decisions, true Presidential Leadership dismisses such group/board misgivings, maintains professional composure, and tries to understand the group/board member's perspectives. Unfortunately, an aggressive board member who does not thoroughly understand the job description role they agreed to perform might have an outburst of retaliation that is handled privately. However, the Professional Leader's perspective of compliance with standards and concern for disallowing negative current and future ramifications must be made known to the entire group/board and recognized as a part of the recorded minutes.

RECOGNIZING FUTURE LEADERS

As a Presidential Leader, watch individual group/board members' behaviors, as they can present personal retaliation behaviors toward efforts to promote psychological astuteness, critical thinking, and common sense. Watchful awareness and careful listening will increase understanding of the true personality and the future leadership abilities of each person in the group/board. Sometimes group/board members need reminding:

"You are not here merely to make a living (as many get paid). You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand." (Woodrow Wilson)

IN CLOSURE:

No one said the role of a Presidential Leader was easy or that some people might not want to understand or recognize the responsibility. The three amigos of intellectual astuteness, critical thinking, and common sense are usually not easily accepted or apparent to the uneducated or

inexperienced leader. However, it is a challenge (and a worthwhile challenge) to attempt true Leadership Presidential compliance for those responsible for the appropriate decisions on behalf of constituents.

Be Aware: Misconstruing leadership efforts of increased understanding and knowledge is common—often with personal efforts to demean or undermine leadership attempts. That is the challenge of a true Presidential Leader—to accept and recognize the negative human behaviors of those who struggle with hearing and trying to understand the positive outcomes of Presidential Leadership behaviors.

No one said that everybody would like an outstanding Presidential Leader—it is hoped that existing and potential group/board members would recognize the Presidential Leadership behavior as caring and responsible regarding ultimate decisions on behalf of all constituents—even themselves.

“Do what you feel in your heart to be right, for you’ll be criticized anyway.” (Eleanor Roosevelt)

TO THE COURAGEOUS PRESIDENTIAL LEADERS

Thank you for your Presidential Leadership efforts if you are privileged to be in that situation! Be thankful you have the intellectual ability, psychological astuteness, critical thinking, and common sense to perform the role. Your Presidential Leadership knowledge, resulting in positive efforts and outcomes, should be your source of personal pride!

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