

WORKING SMARTER, NOT HARDER ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP STYLES IN ADVENTIST COLLEGES

BY RICH CARLSON

You decide to introduce a new computer course at your school. But first, you must submit a plan to your division chair, who then passes it on to the division committee. From there (assuming they have not tabled it or sent it back for further revision), it may go to the academic dean, who carefully places it on the agenda for the next academic council. They decide it must go to a faculty committee for review and then on to the complete faculty senate. The path continues back to the academic council, maybe on to the board, and so on and so forth. Three years later, the program is approved—and the following week, it is discovered to be obsolete and a new proposal begins the trek toward approval.

Unfortunately, this same scenario depicts our dealings with students, constituents, and contemporaries. Are the checks and balances of our institutional governance creating more tension than triumph? How can we collaborate to achieve a solution? What administrative

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changes must take place for change to occur?

Business and industry have been involved in quality management for decades. Because they realize quality means increased sales and success, they are trying hard to listen to the customer and to encourage teamwork among their employees. Those qualities have translated into financial profit, customer satisfaction, and employee loyalty, and therefore are endorsed by CEO's and boards of trustees around the world. But what about educational institutions? Do we

operate from a whole different set of assumptions and standards that make Total Quality Management and other such programs ineffective or inappropriate? We often seem to be wedded to our traditions, using red tape and committees to kill just about every innovative idea.

Caution is appropriate if it keeps us from mindlessly following every whim or new idea that comes along. It must, however, be tempered with the cutting-edge excitement of new, creative thinking. Can the same quality commitments of the business world work effectively in the educational setting? Can we learn to work smarter rather than harder? A paradigm shift toward greater flexibility and responsiveness to the ever-changing needs of our society and the people we serve seems not only inevitable, but also essential for the survival of our school system as we enter the 21st century.

The Research for Refocusing Administration

At the 1995 General Conference session in Utrecht, Holland, data was gath-

ered from our college and university presidents throughout the world field. This became the basis for the author's doctoral research paper entitled *A Comparative Study of Leadership Styles in Seventh-day Adventist Colleges and Universities*,¹ which provides the source for this article's challenge to administrative excellence in our educational institutions.

Kouzes and Posner,² the designers of the instrument used in the study, discovered through observation and research that executives who convinced others to join them on pioneering journeys used a three-phase strategy. They refer to this as the VIP—Vision-Involvement-Persistence—model of leadership. Through the use of case studies and survey questionnaires, they developed a list of five fundamental practices that enable leaders to do extraordinary things.

Essential Leadership Activities

1. Challenging the process

Leaders are pioneers—people who are willing to step out into the unknown, to search for opportunities, to experiment, and to be willing to take risks and seek out new opportunities.

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2. Inspiring a shared vision

The dream or vision is the force that invents the future. Leaders not only envision the future, but also enlist others to move toward the realization of that vi-

sion, to communicate it to others, and to make it their own.

3. Enabling others to act

The people who must produce the results have a sense of ownership. They feel empowered and motivated to produce extraordinary results. The leader fosters collaboration and helps others to become serious "partners" in the process. They then empower others and foster a team spirit.

4. Modeling the way

Visionary leaders act in ways that are consistent with their beliefs. They are persistent in pursuit of their visions, and are always vigilant about the little things that make a big difference. They set an example and anticipate ways to ensure small positive victories for the team.

5. Encouraging the heart

Effective leaders recognize individual contributions and celebrate them with awards and acknowledgments. Loving their products, their people, their customers, their work—this may just be the best-kept secret of exemplary leadership.

The above list became the blueprint for a Leadership Practices Inventory, which sought to measure these qualities in leaders and administrators. After being reviewed by nine professionals in psychology, organizational behavior, and human resource management who were familiar with psychometric issues and management development, the current instrument was finalized.

Personal Leadership Inventory Results

1. Challenging the Process (Items 1-10)

The first section of this instrument evaluated a subject's tendency to question, while seeking opportunities to stretch and grow. The person ranking high in this area would not be afraid to take risks in the name of progress.

The best possible score in this section was 50. Scores of 40 to 50 would be considered high. Totals of 0-20 would indicate a need for improvement.

The mean response for SDA college and university presidents was 40.9, with a standard deviation of 3.42. Though the respondents showed significant interest in questioning and challenging the process, this was not a strong tendency. SDA college and university presidents

do not appear to be extreme activists.

2. *Inspiring a Shared Vision (Items 11-33)*

The person ranking high in this area would be a visionary who constantly looks toward the future and sees possibilities. He or she then communicates this vision to others so that it seems like their own. These presidents would believe that everyone should feel a part of the team. On this item, a perfect score would be 115. High rankings would range between 92 and 115.

The mean was 90.8 with a standard deviation of 8.4. Again, this represents a borderline high rating, with 44 percent of responses falling in the high area. Although the presidents indicated a relatively high interest in inspiring a shared vision for the future, they are no doubt hindered by a need to attend to day-to-day survival operations. This interferes with their ability to dream about long-range goals and ideals for their institutions.

3. *Enabling Others to Act (Items 34-53)*

Those rating high in this area were team players. They were interested in building team spirit by empowering others to act and participate in the process of leadership. A high score in this area would fall between 80 and 100.

The average score was 80.9, with a standard deviation of 10.6. Considering the wide spread of responses at the lower edge of the positive range, one might assume that the ability or interest in enabling others to act does not have a high

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priority. It is, however, still on the upper edge of the scale, which indicates a positive attitude toward enabling.

4. *Modeling the Way (Items 54-66)*

Administrators who score high in this area lead by example. They try to show how they want their associates to respond. Though success is gradual with this style, it is appropriate to use if previous administrations have created a high level of skepticism or morale is low for some reason. A high score would fall between 52 and 65.

The average for SDA presidents was 54.4, with a standard deviation of 4.2. This was the highest score for any area on the survey. In light of the Christian

principles of servanthood, witnessing, and living an exemplary life, it makes sense for this to be a highly rated item.

5. *Encouraging the Heart (Items 67-75)*

These leaders recognize individual contributions and celebrate team accomplishments. They believe that offering praise and encouragement improves employee morale and satisfaction, and will have a direct effect on the organization's success. A high score on this section would fall between 36 and 45.

The score was high (37.8), with a standard deviation of 4.9. In my opinion, this quality has been essential to the success of morale at most of the SDA institutions, since schools have few financial incentives to offer, making encouragement and appreciation about the only viable "perk" available.

Conclusions

If Kouzes and Posner's model³ accurately predicts the future of administration and offers a prescription for potential success in the new millennium, then perhaps the results of this survey can help all of us to re-evaluate our effectiveness, and refocus our priorities on what seems to produce the greatest results, while expending the least additional energy.

Keeping in mind the need for God's presence and guidance, we must also carefully evaluate how, from an academic perspective, we can be the effective leaders God wants us to be. Structural and organizational thought leaders in the world of business and industry just may offer some ideas that we can use with guidance from God.

The five essential leadership activities that characterize effective administration may (1) provide structure for new administrators as they seek to maintain or develop a philosophy on which to act, (2) serve as a reminder for seasoned veterans that growth and development are not only for the leader but also helpful for the whole institution, and (3) challenge all of us to continually seek the most effective way to work smarter rather than harder. ☞

Suggestions for Applying What We Learned

1. Administer the **Personal Leadership Survey** to each person in a leadership position. This will help measure the effectiveness of that administration.
2. Ask several employees and/or students of each institution to evaluate the leadership using the same instrument. This will reveal their perception of the effectiveness by the administration.
3. Use the **Essential Leadership Activities** as a focus for leadership training and a barometer for needed change.
4. Hire people on your team who have strengths in different areas than yours.
5. Periodically, do a personal evaluation of your own effectiveness in leadership.
6. Continually seek to develop a personal model for leadership that incorporates the principles listed above.

RESOURCES (AND FURTHER READING)
Benjamin, Roger, Stephen Carroll, Maryann Jacobi, Cathy Krop, and Michael

Personal Leadership Inventory

In the column next to each item, select the number that best describes how strongly you identify with the statement.

5 - Very Strongly

4 - Somewhat Strongly

3 - Uncertain

2 - Not Very Strongly

1 - Not at All

- | | | |
|-------|-----|---|
| _____ | 1. | Taking risks is an important aspect of my job. |
| _____ | 2. | It is personally challenging to seek out ways to do things differently. |
| _____ | 3. | I'm proud of what I do and seldom think of doing anything else. |
| _____ | 4. | People think of me as innovative. |
| _____ | 5. | Work is enjoyable. |
| _____ | 6. | I try not to get stuck in the routine. |
| _____ | 7. | It is not my job to maintain the status quo. |
| _____ | 8. | I talk to my co-administrators, faculty, and staff as often as possible about the school. |
| _____ | 9. | The best way for me to learn is through trial and error. |
| _____ | 10. | I use faculty/staff meetings to gather ideas. |
| _____ | 11. | To plan for the future, I look at the past. |
| _____ | 12. | Leaders are dreamers. |
| _____ | 13. | I know where I'm going, even though I'm not always sure how to get there. |
| _____ | 14. | I can express my view of the future in concrete terms. |
| _____ | 15. | I believe my vision is possible. |
| _____ | 16. | My vision expresses the ideal for the school. |
| _____ | 17. | In my vision, no one else does what we do. |
| _____ | 18. | Everyone can have a vision. |
| _____ | 19. | Creating a vision is not a logical process. |
| _____ | 20. | I follow my intuition. |
| _____ | 21. | When I get an inspiration, I try it out. |
| _____ | 22. | I try to focus my vision for others. |
| _____ | 23. | I have no trouble talking about where I think this school should be going. |
| _____ | 24. | I'm very optimistic about the future of my school. |
| _____ | 25. | I personally know all the faculty and staff in my school. |
| _____ | 26. | I try to get a sense of what my faculty and staff want. |
| _____ | 27. | People say I create a picture in their minds about the future. |
| _____ | 28. | I like to use metaphors. |
| _____ | 29. | I make it a point to listen to my faculty and staff. |
| _____ | 30. | Getting people excited about working for my school is very satisfying to me. |
| _____ | 31. | I smile a lot. |
| _____ | 32. | I'm always the first to shake hands. |
| _____ | 33. | When I speak, I use my hands to gesture. |
| _____ | 34. | I am a success because my faculty and staff make me that way. |
| _____ | 35. | To get something done, my faculty and staff work as a team. |
| _____ | 36. | Because I want my team to succeed, I discourage competition among team members. |
| _____ | 37. | My faculty and staff believe that if one of us is successful, then we all are. |
| _____ | 38. | To keep people committed, I emphasize long-term goals. |
| _____ | 39. | Among my faculty and staff, there are never win-lose situations. |
| _____ | 40. | I am confident that my faculty and staff will produce. |
| _____ | 41. | My faculty and staff trust me because I trust them. |
| _____ | 42. | There are a lot of give-and-take discussions among administration, faculty, and staff in my school. |
| _____ | 43. | I make sure that my faculty and staff have all the information they need for them to do their jobs. |
| _____ | 44. | Faculty and staff trust me because I am consistent. |

- _____ 45. I have an established system of delegation.
- _____ 46. I believe that my faculty and staff work hard.
- _____ 47. I try to help my faculty and staff grow.
- _____ 48. My faculty and staff share in making the decisions—big and small.
- _____ 49. The right way is not necessarily my way.
- _____ 50. I delegate important tasks.
- _____ 51. I like to tell stories about my faculty and staff's achievements.
- _____ 52. I make a point of getting to know my faculty and staff.
- _____ 53. My faculty and staff know what is important to me.
- _____ 54. I know what is important to my superiors.
- _____ 55. Faculty and staff talk about what is important to our school.
- _____ 56. I practice what I preach.
- _____ 57. I am very aware of how I spend my time.
- _____ 58. I think risk-taking is important and I recognize faculty and staff who take risks—even if they fail.
- _____ 59. I reward faculty and staff who demonstrate the values that are important to my school.
- _____ 60. Stories, symbols, and ceremonies are ways I use to get the school message out to my faculty and staff.
- _____ 61. Change happens gradually.
- _____ 62. Success is made up of lots of small wins.
- _____ 63. I encourage faculty and staff to try little experiments.
- _____ 64. My faculty and staff feel a personal sense of responsibility for their actions.
- _____ 65. I try to be as candid as possible about job demands.
- _____ 66. I give faculty and staff choices.
- _____ 67. I reward individuals who contribute.
- _____ 68. I believe my faculty and staff are winners and I reward them for their efforts.
- _____ 69. I send thank-you notes for jobs well-done—even to people outside the organization.
- _____ 70. I try to be a coach.
- _____ 71. When my faculty and staff do a good job, we celebrate.
- _____ 72. I love to blow my horn about my faculty and staff.
- _____ 73. I love my job.
- _____ 74. Joyful is one way to describe my staff.
- _____ 75. My team has a lot of pride.

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3. Ibid.