



On Servant Leadership

*Toastmasters International's core values are **integrity, respect, service, and excellence**. They remind us that we are stewards of our organization and we have an awesome responsibility to lead in ways that engage members to help them grow.*

In 1970, Robert K. Greenleaf coined the term **Servant Leadership** in an essay, *The Servant as Leader*. He described the 'great leader' as one who is *first seen as a servant to others*. Becoming a servant leader begins *with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first*. He went on to describe this type of leader as one who first makes sure *that other people's highest priority needs are being served*. The question to ask: *do those served grow as persons; do they while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived?* These same fundamental concepts apply to Toastmasters leaders.

Do those served grow as persons?

Each year we choose district leaders, board members, and Toastmasters executive officers. At times we may wonder why more people are not willing to step forward. This can happen when leaders are not challenged to learn and grow.

As leaders within Toastmasters, we have an important opportunity to engage, mentor, and develop new leaders for the future of our organization.

Do they while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?

Some leaders are all too happy to do the work of those who serve on their team. This can happen if a leader does not trust others, or sets perfection as her/his standard. It may be tempting to jump in and take over a task, but in the end there is no learning, and neither the leader nor the learner grows.

As a servant leader, give others a chance to learn and grow. Then get out of the way as they perform beyond our expectations.

What is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived?

The Toastmasters society is manifest in our worldwide network of clubs. Distinguished clubs engage new members by encouraging participation and involving them in our experiential learning system. I believe the best gauge of district health is the number of Distinguished Clubs. These are the clubs that shape our districts and provide the future leaders of our organization.

Touch lives this year as a Servant Leader. We will all benefit as our future leaders experience and understand the qualities of servant leadership.