## Re-energizing the Practice of Leadership for the Public Good
## Public Sector Core Leadership Practices
## Paradoxes of Leadership

In July of 2001 a group of representatives from the National Security Agency (NSA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), Veterans Affairs (VA), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Health and Human Services (HHS), Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Graduate school, USDA, began to meet monthly for the purpose of re-energizing the practice of leadership for the public good.

Since July we have asked ourselves many questions and find ourselves still pondering possible answers. Why have the armed services so successfully linked leadership practices and capabilities to their mission? Why have the civilian services as a rule focused almost exclusively on subject matter expertise? Why do we think about professions and professional certifications for medicine, law and scientific fields but not for leadership? Is leadership a profession?  How will we overcome the structures and mental models that make true public service leadership an impossibility? Who cares about the practice of leadership in the public sector? Why do we lack a common language to describe the leadership practices which foster work places where: people want to work and learn, where employees achieve quality results for the public good and the work place is worthy of the highest aspirations and commitments of its people.

In our attempt to describe the leadership practices we would aspire to, we have focused on the organizational positions where leadership practices are their primary responsibility. We continue to believe that leadership should be encouraged as a part of everyone's profession. As we began our work we made some basic assumptions: 1) the public sector shares common leadership practices that are critical to the success and health of each of our workplaces 2) we needed to describe these leadership practices before we could begin to design a system of life-long learning for our leaders 3) management skills are equally important however much more has been done in this area and will not be our initial focus 4) whatever we create must be actionable and used frequently by real workers and produce measurable results  5) our intention is to support learning leaders through a life-long system of learning and personal mastery 6) we believe that the practice of leadership is critical to the capacity of our organizations to learn and grow as well as attract and retain quality employees.

In describing the key leadership practices we chose to describe them as paradoxes or dilemmas. We felt this better described the dynamic tension and balancing required to become truly masterful in each of these leadership areas. We have all experienced masterful leaders who are comfortable with the interdependence between each of the characteristics in the paradox and recognize them as part of a whole dynamic system.

Your help and ideas would be most welcome as we begin to look at assessment methods in both the public and private sector that will help us identify employees who are naturally inclined and gifted in these leadership paradoxes. We are also looking for effective methods of learning. We are particularly interested in action learning methods that will help to support the continued growth and reflection of public sector leaders throughout their careers.

We recognize the need to build strong partnerships and coalitions as we begin to work on the structural and mental model barriers, which currently affect the practices we are attempting to encourage and develop.

We invite you to join us in this dialog by considering some of our questions and possibly posing some of your own. Please feel free to send your comments or suggestions to my email at **Georgie3@comcast.com**

## 1.
## Creates and Sustains a Shared Vision…………………………………………………………

Acts as the catalyst to help create a shared vision that is aligned with the purpose of the organization.
Willingly enlists others in his/her vision and knows how to refine the vision in order to share it collectively
Knows how to focus the group on the results they want to achieve.
Helps people focus on the future while honoring the contributions of the past
Acknowledges creative tension and helps to focus the group on the power of working from a creative versus a reactive focus
Helps colleagues understand their work systemically (cause and effect implications)
Helps group to anticipate the intended and unintended consequences of their choices

### While Able to Let Go and Re-Direct
.
Knows when to let go and re-think their assumptions.
Knows when to step back and allow others to take the lead.
Knows how to hold the vision of success and re-think tactics and methods for getting there

## 2.
## Sustains Personal Energy ……………………………………………………

Assures that their personal values and vision are aligned with public service and the organization's work and values.
Knows how to re-energize self through vacations, exercise, reflection creative ventures, etc,

### While Energizing Co-workers and the Public

Has a passion for the people who depend on their work and products. Stays in touch with them on a regular basis
Schedules and leads fun events and celebrates successes
Encourages others to create and sustain a personal vision
Encourages and supports employees to re-energize themselves through vacations, exercise etc.

Helps to create an energized and purposeful work environment that attracts and retains high quality people
Exhibits enthusiasm for the work and enables others to strive to be the best that they can be
Spends time with the workforce building relationships (shares war stories, jokes), and knows how to have fun and be accessible
Pursues talent and acquires new thinkers


**3.**
**Grows in Personal Mastery……………………………………………………….**

Uses self-reflection and coaching to gain self-awareness and reassess themselves
and their belief systems
Continuously strives for personal mastery, which engenders trust, respect and inspiration
Insatiable learner and open to new ways of thinking and doing business


**And Builds Collaborative Partnerships**

Seeks out partners from a variety of diverse sources and values partnerships that further the mission of the organization and help them to think differently
Willing to sub-optimize benefits for self on behalf of the greater good
Exhibits political savvy, understands how government works
Educates colleagues and partners, willingly shares information


**4.**
**Maintains Personal and Organizational Values………………………………..**

Recognizes their responsibility for helping to create and sustain the organizational values
Critical organizational decisions are based on strongly held values not short term interests
Personal behavior is consistent with espoused values "Values in Action"

**And Appreciates Difference**

Nourishes many new ways to accomplish tasks that are consistent with the organization's values
Helps others to understand the organizational values and purpose. Helps them leave the organization when there is not a mutually satisfying match between organizational and personal values

**5.**
**Listens Deeply………………………………………………………………**

Listens to understand, knows how to listen to the whole person.
Knows how to reflect back while listening.
Ensures that everyone has the opportunity to be heard

**And Inspires Others to Action**

Creates energy in conveying ideas through their words, body language, etc.
Has a natural passion and enthusiasm for the work and mission of the organization
Exhibits courage in the face of tough decisions
Never turns away from tough assignments; enjoys a challenge
Seek out people with different views and spend time with them

**6.**
**Exhibits Vulnerability…………………………………………………………**

Able to learn in public
Easily admits to not knowing all the answers
Constantly gives credit where credit is due

**And Shows Strength and Self-Confidence**

Has the courage to make decisions without 100% of the information
Makes decisions; if it doesn't work tries again
Delegates whenever possible; only makes the decisions they have to
Shares all available information freely to help in joint decision-making
Provides coaching and advice versus direction

**7.**
**Meets Operational Demands …………………………………………………..**

Holds self and others accountable for measurable quality results
Educates the public and colleagues about realistic customer service expectations and where possible exceeds them
Provides employees with what they need to do the job to the best of their ability
Creates a value for continuous improvement
Ensures that learning can be applied to strategic goals and outcomes
Knows how to keep the organization viable and keeps pace with technology
Knows when to let go of current systems and processes in order to respond to changes in the external environment and customer demands

**And Creates Opportunities for Learning, Reflection and Innovation**

Celebrates mistakes as part of the innovation process
Practices after action reviews as part of their leadership practice
Rewards initiative and persistence
Creates a team learning environment built on joint purpose and trust
Continually raises the bar for improved excellence
Creates organizational practice fields to provide safe opportunities to practice and fail
Creates systems for knowledge transference to accelerate organizational learning
and performance
Maintains an experimental mind set and remains comfortable with ambiguity