

HOW SERVING OTHERS CAN BE THE FOUNDATION OF OUR SUCCESS

by Glenn Williams



I have observed that for many people it is easy for their focus to shift from serving a need (outward orientation) to serving themselves (inward orientation), often causing a significant issue with the sustainability of their business.

'Service' is different depending on the organizational context. For most businesses, 'service' has more to do with making profit from meeting an identified need in the market. In the not-for-profit context, 'service' usually relates to delivering a product or service for the betterment of others, without the need for shareholders to make a profit from it. However, while many people and organizations start out being motivated to serve the needs of others, sometimes their own needs and goals begin to dominate their focus and effort.

In *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power & Greatness*, Greenleaf (1977) provides some key insights that seek to challenge our thinking about leadership and how it is exercised.

Ultimately, it is focused on serving the vision, and the needs of colleagues who are stewards of the resources needed to fulfil that vision. Keith, CEO of the Greenleaf Center, and author of *The Case for Servant Leadership*, identifies seven key practices of servant-leaders (2008). Imagine if we could leverage their importance in the way we work:

- Self-awareness
- Listening
- Changing the pyramid
- Developing your colleagues
- Coaching not controlling
- Unleashing the energy and intelligence of others
- Foresight

What's the bottom-line?

Unlike approaches to leadership founded on a top-down hierarchical style, a servant-leader approach emphasises collaboration, trust, empathy and empowerment.

I wonder what our businesses would look like if we pursued success built on a foundation of serving others?

References

Greenleaf, Robert K. (1977). *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power & Greatness*. New York: Paulist Press.

Keith, Kent. (2008). *The Case for Servant Leadership* (Westfield, IN: The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership).