Maggie Knier

FYEX 100

Strengths in Leadership

When we think of leaders, we often think of big names like Barack Obama, Bill Gates, and Steve Jobs. These people are some of the most renowned leaders of our society, and for good reason. They earned their lofty statuses by capitalizing upon their strongest leadership traits. But, you don’t have to be the President of the United States of America or CEO of a multi-billion dollar company to be a good leader. Each one of us has a unique combination of leadership strengths that affects how we lead.

Growing up I always considered myself an introvert. I was homeschooled through high school and spent most of my time around adults with whom I did not enjoy making conversation with. In my junior year of high school I started taking Post Secondary Education Option courses at my local community college. During these last few years of high school I realized more and more that I was extroverted when I started to feel sad and unmotivated after periods of no social interaction, but would come home from being around my friends feeling energized and happy. In my present situation I would rather choose to go out than to stay in my dorm, and love to have people in my dorm to socialize or hang out together.

After determining that I lean towards extraversion, I learned from the Gallup Strengths Finder that my top 5 leadership strengths are: Competition, Activator, Communication, Woo, and Includer. When in a position of leadership I tend to be very vocal. I feel as though I usually know the right way to do things and I direct others on what their roles should be. I believe that this is largely influenced by my top two strengths of Competition and Activator. My desire to win leads me to take control of groups and make sure everyone is completing their designated tasks. The Activator part of me helps me quickly figure out the best way to complete a task. This combination can make me seem controlling or bossy at times, but my other three strengths: Communication, Woo, and Includer, help to offset this. Because I have these strengths I am comfortable meeting, including, and communicating with others in my group.

In the past few weeks, I have already found it useful to know what my leadership strengths are. Rather than always focusing on trying to be a well-rounded leader, I now know I should be focusing on enhancing the strengths I already have. I believe the best way to grow myself as a leader is to both practice in leadership positions and to be lead by others. My senior year of high school I was the captain of my swim team and that experience taught me many valuable aspects of leadership. These included: how to overcome adversity, stay positive, be committed, and lead by example. Each of these lessons helped grow my capacity for leadership and made me a better leader than my prior self.

Surprisingly however, I learned almost as much about leadership the following semester when I was a senior on my track team and was not a captain. Having gone from a position of leadership to a position of being led, I was able to see our track captains from a different perspective and see what worked with how they led and what didn’t.

Besides the occasional group project, the position of swim team captain was my only leadership position in high school. Since starting college however, I have been actively seeking out leadership positions and am currently a language partner with an international student, the freshman class honor’s representative, am co-introducing the common read author at an event coming up, and have an active role in several group projects. I hope each of these roles will be able to provide me with valuable experience to grow my leadership capabilities and am excited for the opportunities they will provide me. I’m not sure what my future at Minnesota State Mankato holds but I know that I am going to take every opportunity to grow my strengths and become a more capable leader.