

Frank Talk **on** **LEADERSHIP** **Ten Traits of SuperStar Leaders**

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CHAPTER 1

Together Again

“People have to follow you, or you are not leading.”

– Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower

“Leadership?” Bob raised his eyes skyward. “In my first three years as a Rotarian, you would never have used *leadership* and *Rotary* in the same sentence. Most of the people in my club were lemmings: you know, those little rodents that blindly follow the lemming in front of them right over the cliff. They wanted to go on doing the same thing they’d always done before—which was *nothing*—and heaven help anyone who came in with new ideas. So they only elected club officers who thought the way they did—which was to maintain the status quo.”

“That was *your* experience, Bob. But in fairness, I don’t think that represents the way *all* Rotary clubs behave.”

Bob raised his hands defensively. “I agree with you; that is why I left that club. My new club is completely different. I am finishing my presidential year, and these members are very open minded, progressive and supportive of both my ideas and my team.”

“Hi guys!”

We all looked toward the door. It was Sue, wearing a radiant smile, her arms outstretched to give us all hugs. “I’m

sorry I'm late," she gushed. "I was actually early, and then as I crossed the lobby I ran into a fellow district governor elect. He is from Nigeria and was wearing his colorful tribal robes. We are cooperating on a World Community Service project, so we had a lot to talk about. Before I knew it, 20 minutes had passed."

It was good to be with Sue, Bob, and Duncan again. Several years ago, we had met by chance on a train journey while I was Rotary International President. They had initially expressed skepticism over my invitation for them to join Rotary, but as I explained the history, the wonderful work Rotarians perform, and the fellowship we enjoy, all three of them ultimately joined Rotary clubs in their home communities. We had met twice since that train ride, and had stayed in contact with one another by email to exchange ideas. Today we were meeting for the fourth time. It was, I thought, a classic example of how people meet as strangers but become friends through Rotary. There was no better example of that than the story Sue had just told us: of how she and a man from Nigeria had met at a Rotary function and were now harnessing the volunteer power of their clubs at opposite ends of the earth for the benefit of humankind.

We were here on the opening day of the Rotary International Convention, an annual event that draws 20,000 or more Rotarians and guests from more than 150 countries and geographic regions.

I turned to Sue as we all sat down. "Well, this must be exciting for you, eh? Here you are at an International Convention, less than a month away from beginning your term as a district governor."

"Oh, Frank. I don't know *how* to feel right now," she admitted. "Of course I am excited and honored. But I am also terrified."

“Terrified! Of what?” I asked.

“Of failing,” she said. “I have 54 clubs and 3,200 Rotarians in my district. That is 3,200 different personalities, 3,200 different sets of priorities, 3,200 brains pre-programmed to think, ‘Why should I do *that*? We’ve never done it that way before.’”

“Leadership.” It was Duncan who uttered the one-word answer.

“Excuse me?” she queried.

“Leadership,” he replied, softly. “Sue, you are about to become the governor of the district, the captain of the ship, the leader of the team. The reason people will respond to your call to action, to do the things you want them to do, to support the activities *you* have prioritized is directly linked to your leadership skills. The same rule applies to any club, district or Rotary International office, and for that matter, to leadership roles outside of Rotary.”

The group was silent for several moments as the wisdom of Duncan’s pronouncement sunk in. Then he continued. “Look, I spent 43 years with a major chemical company. I began as an apprentice and retired as a senior vice president. Along the way, I worked for a lot of bosses, and ultimately, I suppose you could say, I became one of the bosses. But of one thing I am certain: there is a big difference between being a boss and being a leader. A boss uses authority to order you around; a leader uses inspiration and persuasion. A boss tells you what to do, a leader defines the end result needed and empowers you to take ownership in reaching that goal. A boss uses one-way communication: from him to you; a leader encourages two-way communication—actually, *three-way* communication: upward, downward, and between team members. Subordinates—and I use that word guardedly because, of course, in the voluntary environment, Rotarians are not your subordinates—but subordinates fol-

low a boss's orders because they *have* to. Think of a military officer ordering his enlisted subordinate to do something. The lower-ranked soldier had *better* do what he is told or he is in big trouble. But people follow a leader because they *want* to. Sue, you don't have the power of a military officer or corporate boss. So you need to use your personality, your motivational skills, your ability to sell your ideas and arouse enthusiasm to make those club leaders and grass roots Rotarians *want* to follow you."

"May I add something?" Bob interjected. "I agree with Duncan. He made me think back to a time back in high school when I worked in a donut shop. We had a really awful boss. He came to the store every day and I don't think he even knew our names. He would bark orders and yell at us. We were just kids, so we were terrified of him. As long as he was there, we would do everything he told us. What's that expression . . . *When he said 'jump,' we would ask 'How high?'* But after about six o'clock, he went on to his next store, and as soon as he had left, we would return to doing what we wanted. Thinking back, I am not really proud of the way I acted. But we were teenage kids. We didn't care, because the manager didn't care about us. He had never shared his vision for the business with us; we had no idea why it was important to do the things he was ordering us to do, because he had never taken the time to link his instructions with a value or goal. We had virtually no training, and we watched as he treated all his employees as if they were dirt. So while he was present, we did things his way. But when the cat was away, the mice would play."

"So I hear you both suggesting I avoid modeling the leadership skills of Attila the Hun," said Sue. "I think I could have figured out that one all by myself. My question is not 'What should I *not* do' so much as 'What should I do?' What

are the leadership skills we need to succeed in Rotary—or in fact, to be successful in our personal, professional or business endeavors today?”

“That is an interesting question,” Bob added. “I have just been promoted at work. Do you think there is a correlation between Rotary membership and leadership skills? And if so, are the leadership skills we learn as Rotarians helpful in our business life?”

The three of them looked at me as if expecting a response.

“You have touched on several questions,” I began. “Let me start with how I believe Rotary membership can benefit your career. Say you’re a young man—28 years old—who joins the Rotary club. Pretty soon, they ask you to sit on a committee. You notice how some of your town’s most influential business and civic leaders are also Rotarians, and despite being the new kid on the block, they seek out your opinion and participation. You notice, and learn from, the committee chairperson and your club president. Gradually, you become more involved in club activities. In a year or two, *you* become assistant chair—and then chairperson—of a committee. You learn from those who trod that path before you, but you also begin to learn about planning, goal setting, organization, recruiting, and accountability. Like Bob’s experience in the donut shop, you have already observed the behaviors that turn people off and do not produce the desired results. But you also take note of how some of the members are your community’s leaders: the mayor, bank president, and several self-made entrepreneurs; you learn how they achieved their success and you begin to emulate some of their leadership traits. You notice that the people you need to perform for you are on the one hand volunteers, and on the other hand are very busy leaders in their own right. They might be opinionated, more used to giving instructions than taking them.

“Your personality and performance lead to your nomination in the club’s leadership hierarchy. First as a club officer, and then as club president you learn how to set goals, communicate with different personality types, develop a team, and motivate people. I’ve heard some club presidents describe the job to be like herding cats. Yet there is no doubt in my mind that the skills you have now developed in Rotary will not only make you a better, more effective leader in Rotary—they will serve you well in your career.”

“And vice versa,” Duncan interjected.

“Absolutely!” I affirmed. “I have seen countless men and women bring the leadership skills they learned in their career fields to great advantage in their Rotary clubs. Even in my own company in Mexico, my brothers and I, as executives of a large international corporation have been better leaders in Rotary because of the skill sets we developed at Devlyn Optical. But I also know many of our managers are better leaders of their departments or stores because of what we learned as Rotarians and conveyed to them.”

“That’s where I need to be right now,” said Bob.

“Mexico?” Sue queried.

“No, a more effective manager. I haven’t seen you recently, Sue. I guess you’ve been preparing for your governorship. But about three weeks ago, my boss called me in to tell me they were promoting me to department head.”

There was a spontaneous round of congratulations.

“Thanks, but I am scared to death, although I certainly think my leadership experience as club president will help me.” Bob admitted. “I never wanted to be a manager. I have always been a techie. Give me a laptop and a high-speed Internet connection and leave me alone: I can solve any problem and deliver any project on time. That’s been my mantra since college. Of course, now that I’m married with

a new baby, the better salary and benefits that come with a managerial position will be welcome. But now I have to deal with *people*. I don't know if I have the time or the temperament to deal with the nitpicking problems and personalities of the 40 people I'll be supervising."

Sue spoke first. "Bob, you were thrust into the club president's position when Sandy Haverhill got transferred just a month before she was to assume that position, remember?"

"Oh, I certainly do remember it well," said Bob, rolling his eyes.

"The next day, when you and I went out for coffee because you asked me to drop everything and meet you, do you remember what you told me?"

"Not specifically."

"You said almost the same thing you just told us. You said you were terrified at being club president because you had no formal leadership training and didn't know how you were going to get the members to respect you, or how you could be an effective president. Fifty-one weeks later, the club is stronger, larger, more cohesive, more active in service activities—and people have told me you have been one of the best presidents they have ever known."

"I've heard the same comments—and I'm not even in your club," Duncan added.

Sue looked at Bob directly. "Leadership is not a destination. It is a journey. Today, you and I are at the beginning of a journey—yours toward a new career direction and mine as a district governor. I remember attending a seminar where the famous author Tom Peters² was speaking. 'Management,' he said, 'is about arranging and telling.

² Author of *In Search of Excellence* and a renowned authority on leadership

Leadership is about nurturing and embracing.’ We can put in place the best-laid plans or, as you told us in your story about your donut shop manager, we can tell people to do things all day long—but that will not make us leaders. And we will typically not accomplish our long-term goals. Yet if I change the focus from me to them, and focus on knowing our people—our employees or our club members—we have a better chance of winning them over. Leaders discover what each person on the team wants and why they want it; what they like and dislike, and then know how to motivate them.”

“Frank, you run a big company with hundreds of managers,” Bob began. “How do you teach them management skills?”

“Management skills are *easy*,” I answered. “*Leadership* skills are more difficult—or at least, more important to learn. Of course, we have a formal management training program. But you can learn management skills—you know, the *how* and the *what* of what needs to be done—from books and seminars. But I believe we learn leadership skills by observing others.”

“Sue, I like your analogy of leadership being a journey,” Duncan interjected. “I remember Ray Kroc, founder of McDonald’s saying, ‘You’re either green and growing or you’ll be ripe and rotting.’ I ended up as a senior vice president with DuPro Chemical and yet six weeks before I retired, I signed up for a two-day seminar on cross-cultural communications skills. No matter how long you’ve been in your position, no matter how lofty your title, you never reach your destination—if being *The Perfect Leader* is really your goal. You can always learn how to be a *better* leader. That’s why continuous education is so important.”

“There’s one thing I’d like to add, though,” I said. “We have talked a lot about leadership and titles. Sue, you are

looking for better leadership skills to be a more effective district governor. Duncan, you were vice president of a global corporation. Bob, you want to be a better department manager. Yet you don't need a title to be a leader. Titles are conferred by people above you, but a leader is chosen by those below you."

"I've never thought of it that way," said Bob. "So Frank, you held the highest titles in the entire Rotary world: RI President and then chairman of The Rotary Foundation trustees. You have grown your business from a startup to a multinational company—and you still oversee the company. In your opinion, is there a formula for good, effective leadership?"

I again realized three pairs of eyes were focused on me, expecting an answer. "I know it is common nowadays to put everything in neat lists, such as *The 7 Habits* or *The Five Secrets* of something or other," I explained. "I don't know how much imagination it would take for me to fit everything into neat little boxes, but I have a top ten list. As I traveled around the globe, meeting some of the people at the very pinnacle of success in government, commerce, and the voluntary sector, I noticed certain common denominators. These are the qualities that transcend nationality, gender, religion, and the level of affluence. I call them the *Ten Traits of SuperStar Leaders*. Would you like to hear them?"

"Yes!" came the chorus, as if from one voice.

"OK then, here goes." I noticed my three friends had taken out pens to make notes.

Number One: Integrity.

Two: Charisma.

Three: Relationships.

Four: Competence.

Five: Wisdom.
Six: Goal oriented
Seven: Generosity.
Eight: Enthusiasm.
Nine: Solution oriented.
and Ten: Be a visionary.”

“Wow, that’s quite a list!” said Sue. “Would you care to share some of your insights on how we can develop those characteristics?”

“Sure,” I responded. “We can talk about a couple of them now, and then I have to go to my room and receive a conference call from Mexico. Let’s start with number one.”

What you need to know

- ✓ Your own success as a leader is dependent more on those below you in the hierarchical ladder than those above you.
- ✓ There is a big difference between being a manager/boss and being a leader.
- ✓ The boss uses authority, the leader uses persuasion and inspiration.
- ✓ A boss tells you what to do; a leader defines the desired outcome and empowers followers to take ownership in reaching that goal.
- ✓ A boss uses one-way, top-down communications; a leader encourages three-way communications.
- ✓ Participating in Rotary leadership teaches many of the skills needed to be more effective in one’s business, professional, community, and family life.
- ✓ Leadership is not a destination, it is a journey.

- ✓ You don't need a title to be a leader, and having a title doesn't make you a leader.
- ✓ The Top Ten Traits of SuperStar Leaders are:
 - Integrity
 - Charisma
 - Good at Relationships
 - Competence
 - Wisdom
 - Goal oriented
 - They practice Servant Leadership
 - Enthusiasm
 - Solution-oriented
 - Vision

***“Leadership is a
potent combination of
strategy and character. But
if you must be without one,
be without strategy.”***

Gen. Normal Schwartzkopf