

WHAT MAKES A GREAT COMMISSIONER?

During conversations about recruiting commissioners, the question seems to come up over and over again: “what makes a great commissioner?” Usually, that question is seeking a list of skills, knowledge, and experience that should be considered prerequisites when looking for new commissioners.

The answer is relatively simple, but the list isn’t universal. There is, however, one item that should be first on every list: *a great commissioner has a servant’s heart!* Why? All commissioners are leaders; *great commissioners are servant leaders.*

Robert K Greenleaf, who coined the term “servant leader” around 1970, said this: “The servant-leader is a servant first...Becoming a servant-leader begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is a leader first... The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served.”

Those with a servant’s heart demonstrate certain characteristics that enable them to be great commissioners:

- ✓ Effective Listening – they seek to understand what a speaker is saying to them, demonstrate their interest, and provide feedback.
- ✓ Empathy – they can understand and share the feelings of the one with whom they are speaking.
- ✓ Vision – they are able to assess current strengths and needs and then envision and communicate a future that builds upon the former and addresses the latter.
- ✓ Persuasion – they are able to translate vision into action; they can cause people to believe in and work towards fulfilling a vision.
- ✓ Accountability – they spend their time celebrating other’s success and looking for ways to improve performance than in offering criticism. When issues arise, they take responsibility publicly and work privately to avoid recurrence.
- ✓ Team Orientation – they build teams and engage them in creating and fulfilling a vision; they seek opportunities to enable team members to grow and develop knowledge and networks that will enable greater success.

Those with a servant’s heart are comfortable with and prepared to demonstrate the characteristics of “2nd Century Service:”

- ✓ Visioning
- ✓ Continuous improvement
- ✓ Engagement
- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Linkage
- ✓ Transparency

Technical skills, experience, passion, priorities – all of the things we’ve talked about before in other articles about recruiting commissioners, are important. But a servant’s heart is the single prerequisite when seeking Unit Service candidates.

Much of the rest of the list comes from work done before recruiting begins; see “How Do I Build My Team?” elsewhere in this issue.