

Reevaluating successful leadership styles...

By  Maiyo Febi

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From domineering demi-god bosses to compassionate collaborators in pursuit of the greater good, what it means to be a leader has drastically changed over the years.



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Back in the 19th century, leadership roles were primarily reserved for men. The pages of history tell the stories of kings and conquerors who led against all odds and performed great exploits; think Napoleon, Genghis Khan and Alexander the Great. Against this backdrop, the great man [theory](#) of leadership emerged. According to the theory, you are born a leader with innate abilities and talents like persuasiveness, a commanding personality, intelligence, aggressiveness, action orientation and so on, that set you apart from others and enable you to assume positions of power and authority. [Prachi Juneja](#) said:

“ The theory implies that those in power deserve to be there because of their special endowment. ”

Fast forward to 2020. As the coronavirus pandemic storms across the world infecting countries and economically affecting small businesses to transnational corporates, many leaders are displaying aspects of servant leadership (compassion, empathy, humanity, etc.), a type of leadership that has been quietly gaining popularity and been around since the 1970s (founded by [Robert Greenleaf](#)).

While servant leadership may seem fitting given the global economic, social and political downturn; companies like Marriot International, Starbucks and Nordstrom have been [advocates](#) of it long before Covid-19.



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Servant leadership is a legitimate and complete leadership theory usable by any leader under normal (or 'new normal') circumstances, not just calamitous conditions. Considering the collective heightened sense of humanity and affinity, servant leadership is a serious contender for new ways to lead in the new normal post Covid-19.

The seven pillars of a servant leader are:

1. **Person of character:** Integrity and humility are key drivers.
2. **Puts people first:** Shows care and empowers others to meet their goals.
3. **Skilled communicator:** Connects persuasively and invites authentic feedback.
4. **Compassionate collaborator:** Embraces diversity and is a skilled conflict negotiator.
5. **Has foresight:** Learns from the past, deeply listens to the current scenario and anticipates the future. Great visionary.
6. **Systems thinker:** Strategically minded, big picture thinker with a view of the smaller parts. Adaptable and agile.
7. **Leads with moral authority:** Earns the respect and admiration of peers. Inspires trust and confidence. Builds a culture of accountability.

The servant leadership model offers many positive outcomes including:

- Loyal and engaged employees – The encouragement of collaboration leads to employees feeling heard and valued.
- Innovation and creativity – The transparency and openness inspires employees to think out of the box and share ideas.
- Improved productivity – All efforts result in higher levels of productivity as employees' success is intricately linked to the success of the organisation.



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A servant leader listens carefully and values the needs and contributions of others leading to inclusiveness and more balanced decisions. Consequentially, a servant leader tends to develop influence far more consistently than those who believe they have all the answers - [Harvard Business Review](#)

A servant mentality removes the leader from the spotlight, eliminating self-interest and personal glory from job motivation. This in turn stimulates trust as the focus is primarily on the success of the team and the organisation; a far more inspiring and sustainable approach in times of crisis and beyond.

ABOUT MAIYO FEBI

Maiyo is the founder and managing director of Native Worx, a boutique consultancy that empowers leaders to position transformation as an essential part of an organisation's growth & development through solutions in change management, corporate affairs and building a culture of personal accountability.

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