

MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Susan Spice

From: Bree Robinson

Date: March 10, 2019

RE: Leadership Reflection

We were lucky enough to have guest speakers from the City of Auburn come and speak to us regarding their job roles, what leadership means to them, and overall some tips for entering the workforce. While they all were very informative and interesting to listen to, there were a few specific lessons that stuck out to me, personally!

Jim Buston - Auburn City Manager

Mr. Jim Buston spoke a lot about how important leadership is and what it means to exhibit leadership skills. As Auburn's City Manager, he is in a unique position to be involved with and represent the citizens of Auburn! While I feel I learned many valuable lessons during our time with Mr. Buston, these three key lessons stood out the most to me:

1. Have a vision – be passionate!
 - Mr. Buston spoke about how people are not born leaders, but that they merely exercise leadership skills and practices. As someone in such a high position with the city, it was interesting to hear him say this. It was easy to tell that while he's been in this job role for years, he is not complacent. He spoke about how if you have a vision and are passionate about it, then everything that comes after will flow more naturally. If you're passionate about what you're working towards, it will show in your work ethic and you will lead by example. "No matter what your organization does — whether it's offering a service or building products — it is important that your culture be infused with meaning. Studies show that people who have a sense of purpose are more focused, creative, and resilient, so leaders should make a point of reminding employees how their work is improving people's lives." (Seppala)
2. Empower others to be successful.
 - Mr. Buston also spoke about empowering others to be successful. A good leader will always empower the others around them! We spoke specifically in our class about how attitudes can spread, so by empowering others a leader you will be uplifting others and spreading that positivity.
3. Continue to educate yourself.
 - Lastly, Mr. Buston stressed how important it is, as a leader, to continue to educate yourself! He talked about how it should be a priority to be ever-learning and using it to the best of your ability. This is my favorite lesson I took away from Mr. Buston. I agree that leaders should always be learning! If a leader becomes complacent then they are exhibiting that to the others around them and setting a bad example.

In a role as important as City Manager, it's extremely important to be aware of your actions and persona. Mr. Buston's recommendations for potential leaders are all important and I believe they can be applied to any job role, even my current role as a student!

Forrest Cotton – City of Auburn Planning Director

Mr. Forrest Cotton spoke a great deal about how he ended up in the role he is in now. I enjoyed hearing this, as a student, because it gave me an idea of what to expect upon graduating and entering the work force. Mr. Cotton spoke about past leaders he had worked under and what he had learned about leadership along the way.

1. Invest in people. Anyone in the department should be able to answer questions and help people out.
 - Mr. Cotton stressed that a good leader will make sure that everyone on their team is on the same page. Having a set goal that everyone is on board helps everything else run smoothly. If everyone is on the same page, then information will flow better and everyone will be more helpful to citizens being served. Motivating them would be a priority!
2. Be meticulous with due dates and deadlines. (Planning is known for this!)
 - Mr. Cotton also talked about how planners are known for being meticulous with their due dates and deadlines! I think this is a leadership skill, as it creates accountability in a workplace and allows the leader to set an expected standard!
3. Be general! It's not always good to know everything about one thing. Know a little about everything!
 - I found this lesson to be the most interesting and extremely applicable on our journey to become leaders. He warned us against focusing too much on one issue or topic! If we know so much about one thing and are not educated on current events or general knowledge, we could appear ignorant. Mr. Cotton said he believes a good leader knows a little about a lot!

As the Planning Director for Auburn, Mr. Cotton has a lot of public scrutiny to deal with. He even mentioned during his speech that people tend to get upset over land and money, which he deals with both pretty regularly. His lessons to invest in people, be organized with expectations, and be general in your knowledge are all lessons I can carry with me into my career, whether planning or not!

Kristin Reeder – Human Resources Director

Mrs. Kristin Reeder came out immediately telling us that attitude is everything! She makes the choice every day to exhibit a positive attitude, and it truly shows! She is a joy to be around and I wanted to include her in my reflection, as her leadership tips are important to me. She seems to practice what she preaches!

1. Leadership is a journey of choices!
 - She spoke about how the people in charge will make choices every day that will determine the type of leader that they will be. Being a good leader is a never-ending journey, because there is always room for improvement.
2. The field of Public Administration is a calling. We're lucky to be in a position able to make a difference.
 - This was a good reminder for us all. As I enter my career in public administration, I hope to keep her same attitude about her job role. Mrs. Reeder spoke about how lucky we should feel to be able to make a difference and work for people. Keeping this attitude is definitely a trait of a leader that I would aspire to emulate.
3. Listening is critical. If you want to see who your leaders are in a room, stop and look to see who people look to.
 - I think this can be used to reflect on yourself! If you are in a leadership role and people aren't looking to you first, then you might need to work on your leading skills. It's important to listen to what people need from you; whether that be encouragement, more guidelines, or even criticism.

Mrs. Kristin Reeder focused a lot on the attitude and purpose of a leader. She uses her position as HR Director as an opportunity to help people. Human Resources does more than just hire people! She wanted us to remember that HR doesn't only help people, but it helps the people helping people too.

My Leadership Style: My Reflection

Listening to all of the speakers from the City of Auburn helped give some insight into how they all choose to lead others. The three speakers I specifically mentioned, Jim Buston, Forrest Cotton, and Kristin Reeder, are all in leadership roles. While they seem to all have different leadership styles, they all touched on how important it is to listen to others around you! Working for the city, and its citizens, involves a lot of public participation. In the field of public administration, being willing and able to listen is a crucial leadership characteristic!

I have not entered the working world of public administration yet, but it is my goal for the future. Being given the opportunity to learn from others, who have spent time in the field I hope to enter, is extremely helpful! While they all offered different lessons, I took something useful away from each speaker. For example, my main takeaway from Mr. Buston was to have a vision and continue to educate yourself as you go! I know as I enter the workforce it could be tempting to sit back and coast once I've reached a desired goal, but he inspired me to never stop learning and to always have a vision to focus on.

My main takeaway from Mr. Cotton was to invest in people. As a potential leader in the future, I want to invest in my people. I believe that a team's strength is not based on how strong the leader is alone, but how strong the whole team is individually. I want to invest in every single member of my team so that they are the best that they can be and I'm helping them reach that goal.

My main takeaway from Mrs. Reeder was to keep my attitude in check! If I hope to be a good leader then it needs to always remain a goal for me! She made me contemplate about how being a good leader is a choice you make every day through your attitude. I want to be a positive

leader and positive influence on my people. If I am successful in entering the field of Public Administration, then I will be lucky enough to be in a position that can make a difference in the lives of others. Making the choice every day to be the best leader and the best person I can be will allow me to lead by example, invest in people, and keep my vision to succeed in check!

In the grand scheme of things, my leadership style is still developing! It will always be a goal of mine to become a better leader. I will hope to always keep my core values, some of which were inspired by our speakers from the City of Auburn:

- Valuing and investing in my people
- Empowering others
- Continuing to educate myself
- Setting reasonable expectations
- Having a good attitude
- Listening to others around me
- Being approachable
- Being fair and consistent
- Creating relationships with my people
- Motivating my employees
- Remembering my ultimate purpose, vision, and goals!

Overall, the leadership style I am hoping to convey, as of now, is *Democratic*! I was leaning toward Collaborative, and I feel like there is definitely a time and place for it, but ultimately, I do not think that style of leading suits me. “Democratic leadership invites the participation of staff members and others, not only in decision-making, but in shaping the organization's vision. It allows everyone to express opinions about how things should be done, and where the organization should go. By bringing in everyone's ideas, it enriches the organization's possibilities. But it still leaves the final decisions about what to do with those ideas in the hands of a single person.” (Rabinowitz)

My style of democratic leadership would incorporate my good attitude, as well as eagerness to listen to others in the workplace! All of the leaders we had speak to us stressed how important listening to your people is. Public administration is all about working with and for the people. I truly feel like my democratic style of leadership would be well suited to the workplace in the field of public administration. There are always going to be things I need to work on and skills I can heighten to be a better leader. It will be a journey of choices, like Mrs. Reeder said! I look forward to taking all the lessons I've learned with me into my future career.

References:

Rabinowitz, P. (n.d.). Section 3. Styles of Leadership. Retrieved from <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/leadership-ideas/leadership-styles/main> (Reading 1)

Seppälä, E. (2016, February 23). To Motivate Employees, Do 3 Things Well. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2016/01/to-motivate-employees-do-3-things-well>