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EXAMINING THE APPLICATION OF SERVANT LEADER THEORY

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M.S. in Leadership

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BACKGROUND

• Greenleaf's servant leader theory is not a new concept, but it is relatively under examined as compared to other leadership theories

• Servant leader theory has become popular in certain communities, but there seems to be a lack of a definite model how to employ it (contractual service obligation)

• Greenleaf's theory may be a key to achieving organizational excellence by attaining Maslow's highest order needs (self actualization)

• Changing times do not call for new approaches so much as finding common ground and servant leader theory can be the bridge to tie these commonalities

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Common thread: attributes characteristics/traits with no answer as to how or why servant leader theory works

- Association of Greenleaf and Maslow's theories is not well documented

- Contradiction: one source stated servant leader theory is not valid at all, as it overlooks the impact of human nature when individuals are placed in leadership roles

CONCLUSIONS

• Correlating Greenleaf's theory to Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a definitive link to why servant leadership is effective

• When servant leader practitioners fulfill workers' higher needs, they have the workers' full attention and potential available for job performance

• In modern era, leaders must inherently focus on meeting higher order needs to access workers' full potential

• Unmet needs equal to barriers or decrements of individuals' abilities and bandwidth to perform; servant leader theory removes these barriers

•Servant leader practitioners can develop a culture of followers who then become servant leaders themselves, and a cycle of the practice perpetuates itself

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