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Follower-centric: An approach to leadership

Abigail C. Flores

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Why Followership?

- Who are followers?
- How do people end up as followers as opposed to leaders?
- What responsibilities do leaders have to followers and visa versa?
- Does leadership theory adequately and realistically address the needs and expectations of followers? If so, how? Or if not, why not?
- Are there different kinds of followers?
- Are followers different in different settings?
- Are followers important? Why or why not?

This line of questioning led me to finalize my capstone question:

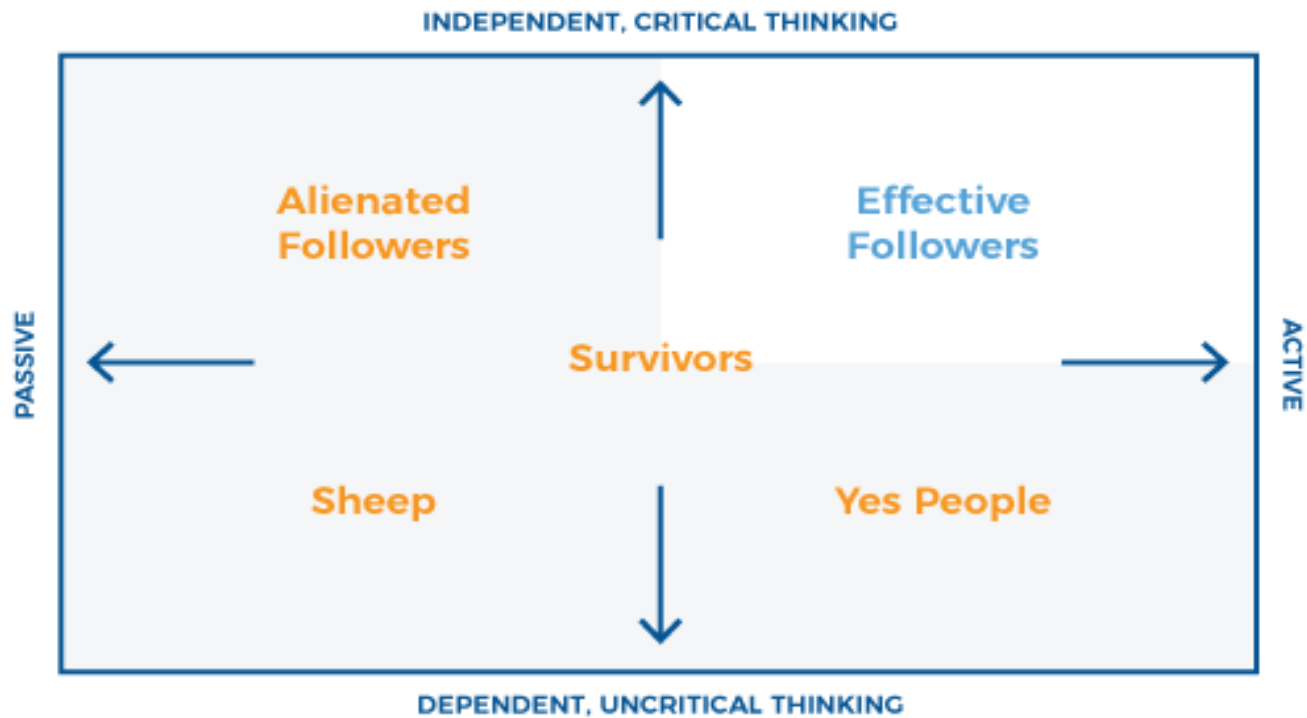
How does followership contribute to effective leadership?

What is Followership?

- The silent partner to leadership
- The willingness to accept the influence of the leader
- Effective followers “have the vision to see both the forest and the trees, the social capacity to work well with others, the strength of character to flourish without heroic status, the moral and psychological balance to pursue personal and corporate goals at no cost to either, and above all, the desire to participate in a team effort for the accomplishment of some greater common purpose.”

(Kelley, 1998, as cited by Raelin, 2003, p. 36)

ROBERT KELLY'S FIVE FOLLOWERSHIP TYPES



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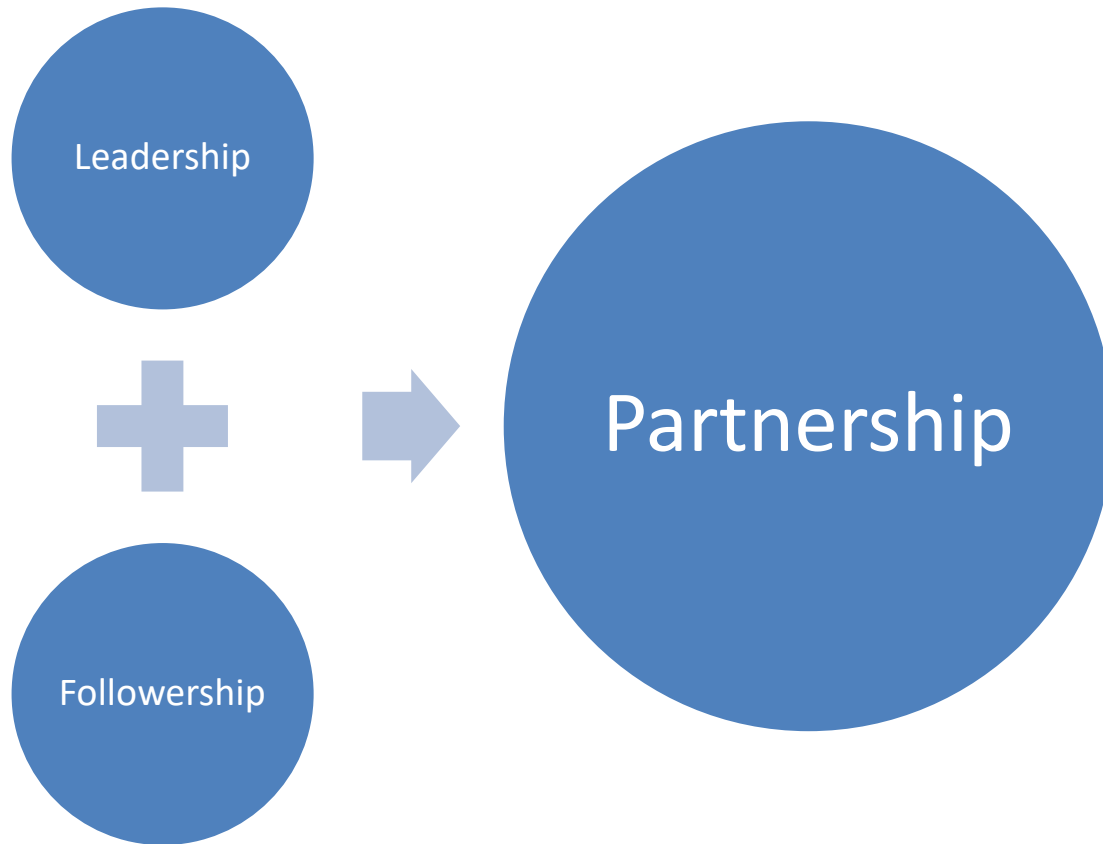
Source: Dr. Robert Kelley, hbr.org/1988/11/in-praise-of-followers

Methodology: Literature Review and a Survey

Results: 100 Responses

- Most self-identify as both a leader and a follower
- Most are unfamiliar with Followership, and perceive it to have negative connotations
- Most are familiar with leadership, and perceive it to have positive connotations
- Most self-identify as an Effective follower
- Most prefer to follow Servant or Transformational leadership
- Most self-identity as a Servant of Transformational leader
- Most prefer to lead Effective followers

Conclusion: Followers are active contributors to organizational performance, and they prefer to follow Servant and Transformational leaders. Effective followers and effective leaders exhibit, and value, many of the same traits and behaviors. In essence, they mirror each other, and in that way, it can be extrapolated the effective followership is a form of leadership.



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