



MYERS-BRIGGS & SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

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Editor's Note: This publication is drawn from a series of conversations between Ralph Lewis and Larry C. Spears over a period of several years. The central focus is on the intersecting points between Myers-Briggs and servant-leadership—two separate concepts that, the authors believe, when taken together, can serve to further their mutual development.

Larry C. Spears: You and I have had several lengthy conversations over the years regarding servant-leadership and Myers-Briggs. Given your knowledge and experience as an MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) trainer, why don't we begin with a quick review of the origins of what is now generally referred to as Myers-Briggs, and which grew out of Carl Jung's writings.

Ralph Lewis: The most important place to start on the Myers-Briggs side is with Carl Jung, and then to place upon that the typology that Isabelle and her mother Katherine Myers-Briggs developed. For me, Jung gives a very simple, coherent framework that is actually about human development. Jung was not interested so much in the classification of people as he is in the creation of a "compass," a map, to look at the journey that we all have throughout life. For Jung, typology was a starting point—a basic orientation for how we deal with the world. At the core of all of it is the recognition that each person has preferences in viewing the world. It is not so much a given as a starting point to say this is your personal preference for



how you deal with all the issues and complexities of the world—how you choose to make meaning of the world. But, I think a very important point to stress here, Larry, is that it’s a journey, and once we understand the beginnings of where these preferences are, Jung is quite clear that whether we like it or not, we need to develop a dynamic within ourselves. In fact, Jung saw this as a source of much creativity.

Katherine and Isabelle Myers then translated Jung’s work into what is called the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI), which they started in the 1920s in Florida. Their premise was very much in line with Jung, and with Robert Greenleaf, which was to help people to understand their own unique gifts. In fact, Isabelle’s last work on Briggs typology was called *Gifts Differing*, which was based on a quotation from St. Paul. She really wanted to emphasize that we all have gifts that we bring into the world, and for her, the most important aspect of the typology was in helping us recognize those gifts in ourselves, but also, recognizing those gifts in other people. That is why I think that Isabelle was a true servant-leader. This was not something that she was doing to classify people; rather, she sought to help people to understand better both themselves and others. She sought to serve others in this way.

Larry: Robert K. Greenleaf’s efforts to serve others are probably best known through his writings on servant-leadership in a number of essays and books in which he sought to develop and share his thinking with others on the meaning of “the servant as leader.” However, before we talk about servant-leadership, I would like to ask you if you could share your thoughts about the Myers-Briggs typologies as the construct relates to the field of leadership broadly. How have you come to view its potential benefit and usefulness for leaders, and in the area of leadership education?

Ralph: Everyone leads in a different way. There are certain things we have to do as leaders: paint a picture, create a vision, wade forward, and communicate that to people. However, we may do it in very different ways. Not



only do we do it in different ways, but also we can have different objectives for doing it. If we want people to develop as leaders, we need to recognize that what is right for one person could be horrendous for another person. They simply could not lead in that way. One of the key issues that we find in most organizations is that there is an enormous tendency for leaders to try to develop other people in a clone image. We try to create other leaders in our own image, and for me, the most important identifier of a good leader is whether they allow others to do things differently.

I did some work for a small organization, and the managing director was from a financial background. Very concrete and down-to-earth. Very keen on detail, on budget, on order. Good stuff, because you need that in organizations. However, he hired a marketing director that I never got to meet because he fired him after just three weeks. I said, "Why did you get rid of him?" He said, "Well, he wasn't doing his job. He was a terrible marketing director." I said, "What happened?" He said, "Well, you know what he was doing? He was out taking customers to lunch every day. He wasn't in his office working." I laughed, I'm afraid, and I said, "But if I had just joined the company as a marketing director, I would want to know what the customers thought of us." "That's not proper work," he said. I tried to get him to understand that the marketing director had been working diligently, but in a very different way, and I failed.

Larry: I have seen the same thing occur in the non-profit field over the years, between non-profit boards and their chief executives. While I favor small boards over large boards, one of the particular challenges of a small board that can arise is if it is made up predominantly of a particular Myers-Briggs type and a chief executive from an opposing type. I have observed this occurrence in several organizations over the years, and I have experienced it directly, myself. It can be very difficult.

Ralph: Absolutely. In fact, that is a very good example because a lot of work has been done on teams. Now, a board isn't quite a team, but it is a group of people who have a shared commitment to something. One of the



findings is that the very best teams are ones that have the range of types of people with different preferences in them. To take your example, if you have a chief executive of one type and a board of other types, in practice that could be extremely good, providing they all understand and respect the different points of view. If they are going to succeed, they will succeed much better than anyone else will, but, and there is a big *but* here, there is always potential for disaster because of conflict. The other situation is where you have a CEO who has a board having the same Myers-Briggs type and there is no opposition, no discussion; then they are liable to agree very easily and without much debate. On the face of it, you would think that is a good thing. However, there is a real potential for terrible things to happen when there isn't any conflict.

A very good example of that from U.S. history is the Bay of Pigs invasion. President John F. Kennedy made the decision to invade the Bay of Pigs in Cuba and everyone said, "Yes, Mr. President." Such a disaster. Afterward he asked, "Why didn't you challenge me?" and they said, "You are the president. We thought it was a stupid idea, but we didn't say so." Kennedy, to his credit, said: "Every time I bring forth an issue, I want someone in this group to tell me all the reasons why it will not work." Healthy differences can actually generate the best solutions.

Larry: There seems to be some difference of opinion within the Myers-Briggs literature regarding personal preferences and desirable balance. Some suggest that our preferences are also usually our strengths, and that rather than attempting to develop some internal balance (say between our Sensing and Intuitive elements), we really should lead with our strengths and not attempt to develop our inferior, secondary functions. Others suggest that there is an unconscious aspect within most of us that will ultimately seek to assert itself later in life in an effort to create a more balanced and whole person. What say you?

Ralph: Whatever your preference, Jung would say, "If you're going to be very good in this one area, you're not going to be good in this opposing



area.” However, balance is a lifelong task. We may or may not get there. The key is recognizing this and making certain that you have someone else in your team, or working with you, who complements you, and the most important point is to listen to that person. I have worked with many managers who are very task focused and who have very few people skills, but the common ending is to achieve the bottom line. The good ones recognize this and don’t try to become the world’s best coach, but they make certain that they are complementary. Often their personal assistant serves as their complementary partner.

I can remember one leader who had his p.a. in his office before we went in, and when we went in—she would always ask you in ten minutes early, and would say, “Well, he’s been telling me how much he appreciates you and the work you did the other day. He thinks that presentation you gave the other day did this,” or “He’s a bit concerned about that,” and people would leave her feeling wonderful, and then he would say, “Well, this needs to happen by this, and this needs to happen by that,” and you’d say, “Yes, that’s fine,” and you’d walk out and she’d say, “There you go! You know it’s only because he trusts you to do the job.” I don’t know if it was deliberate, but it was very clever and effective.

Larry: I believe that both Jung’s work and Myers-Briggs are to some degree about the implicit search for wholeness. Likewise, Robert Greenleaf’s writings on servant-leadership have a similar goal in mind. To what degree is it possible or desirable for each of us to become more balanced? Alternatively, is our type preference pretty much set within each of us?

Ralph: Well, I feel very strongly that in organizations it is much better to have people who balance you because that is better in a practical, everyday sense. In addition, if you have those people and you are open to them, you can develop more yourself. You will actually learn from them. So, on a practical everyday level, have people who are complementary, with whom you enjoy working and whose abilities and differences you respect. Jung was a mystic, and he talked about the self with a large S, “Self,” and the



“ego.” The ego for Jung was the provisional construct. Ego is the way that we use to order the world. The Self, the conscious and the unconscious, contains all the characteristics, all the typologies. It’s just that we have an unconscious tendency to view the world in a certain way. Let’s say you have been brought up as a scientist. You can think analytically quite well, but you may be terrible at writing poetry or counseling people. It isn’t that you can’t write poetry; it’s just that it isn’t your natural tendency. Jung was clear that the journey through life is a journey through wholeness, but there are different stages.

He would say that up to midlife, our responsibility is to help one another by going with our preferences. It is to make the most of our natural tendencies. Therefore, if you have a natural tendency toward analytical thinking, you should use it, rather than attempting to write poetry. That is how you can best serve others. When you have succeeded in the world (and your definition of success will depend on your typology), then midlife kicks in. Moreover, it’s not a matter of chronological age. Some get there earlier, some later. Some never get there. It could be at age 30, 45, 60, etc. that the natural tendency of the psyche to want to balance itself out will occur. Whether we like it or not, Jung says, the unconscious will have its way.

I liken it to holding a helium-filled balloon underwater. The natural tendency of a helium-filled balloon is to float upwards, but you have pushed it underwater, and you keep pushing and pushing, attempting to hold it down. Eventually, of course, what is going to happen is that your hands are going to slip and the balloon is going to burst out of the water. The harder you push down, the more forcefully it is going to come up in your face, and Jung states that that has happened to all of us.

Let’s say that you are an extreme judging type—someone who likes everything planned, ordered, settled. Jung would say, “But you have in you, on the unconscious side, an equal capacity to be playful, spontaneous, and to just go with the flow. That is your balloon under the water. Now, don’t worry about this until midlife when you have used your judging to plan, organize, and get where you want to be. Then you can start letting



your spontaneity and playfulness rise gently to the surface. There's no more need to hold it down as strongly as before." There is a very interesting book on the shadow side of personality types by Murray Stein. He talks about how, in midlife for example, the more intuitive people, thinking people who tend to deal in ideas and concepts, suddenly develop an interest in tennis or other sports that are more practical and down-to-earth. It's as if a person says, "I've achieved this, so now I'll take more of an interest in other areas."

Now, if you, as a strong judging type, are fearful of losing control and you push even harder to keep that balloon of spontaneity underwater, then Jung would say, "Fine, but the balloon is going to come up and hit you sometime." Jung is saying that which we did not bring to awareness *will* manifest itself in our lives whether we like it or not. Jungians are very keen on this. I know a man who was working in a job that he did not enjoy. He wanted to be a Jungian analyst, but it was impossible, economically. He had three car accidents in the space of a year; the third time he hit the tire of a bus carrying some senior citizens, and for him, these were very strong messages from his unconsciousness saying, "Your life is not on the right track. You're going to keep running into obstacles until you get yourself settled down." Maybe slightly farfetched, but if you are going to work, feeling miserable and unhappy, Jung would say, "Look at yourself. You are not using your talents," and Isabelle Myers would say, "You are not directing your talents in the way they should go." It's like a river flowing to the sea. Your talents are being blocked; you need to find the right riverbed for them.

Larry: Is it a matter of not using your talents, or is that you have not developed your opposing gifts?

Ralph: It can be either, you see. That's the complication. This is why anyone who does the Myers-Briggs work needs to spend some time in deep reflection, because we are born with preferences. If I'm brought up in an environment that blocks the use of my preference, I may actually, in an



ironic way, develop the opposite first, but life will be hard. Life will be exhausting, because it is as if I am always trying to wade upstream.

Let me give you a very quick example. Someone I knew from the city of Glasgow was brought up in a poor area. There were no books in the house. If she ever read, which she enjoyed doing, she was laughed at. So she got a job in a retail organization, and because she was highly intelligent, eventually she moved to being a personnel manager. When she did the Myers-Briggs at the age of about 25, she came out as a very strong people person Myers-Briggs type. I didn't believe this because she didn't have fun using her people skills. There was no spontaneity. There was no joy. She talked about what she should do with people, but it was just going through the motions. Eventually her job was eliminated and she decided to go back, and I think she decided to go to college. She was accepted for her master's degree, and she loved it! It was as if she was coming to life for the first time. She did the Myers-Briggs with me a year later and she came out as an intuitive-thinking type, which is the theoretical, conceptual, slightly academic type, and I personally believe that she had found her true calling. Now she is a lecturer at a business school, and she says, "You know, they pay me to do this!", as if she couldn't believe it. Most people, if they have reasonable breaks in life, will develop their talents. Unless they blindly follow their parents! You know, you hear of the accountant who says on his deathbed, "I wish I had played the piano, or had been in a rock band," for example. However, most people do seem to get more or less good use of their talents. It is those people who Jung would say in midlife need to develop their opposites.

Larry: Let's take the balloon analogy a bit further. What are your thoughts about how that fits into the four sets of types? Are we likely to be hit in the face, or to naturally balance out those extreme divisions within our own personality? In addition, if you are not consciously trying to do that, is the balloon more likely to hit you in the face in different ways?

Ralph: Very good questions! It is a slight heresy to orthodox Myers-Briggs



thinking and to a degree the Jungian theory, but I do think that we can develop. If you get people who are in the middle between thinking and feeling, the perceived wisdom is either that they are immature in the sense either that they have not developed fully or that they are mature and they have developed both thinking and feeling, but they don't have a particular preference. My rule of thumb normally is that if you have a young person, say 18 or 25, and the test results between thinking and feeling come out equally, I would be slightly suspicious. I would say that they haven't been faced with enough of life's challenges to know which road they would go down. But when I meet people with experience that are 40, 50, 60, then I do find that they often have allowed themselves to develop the other side. The key is the expression "allowed themselves," because I don't think you consciously need to say, "Today I will develop my other side," but there will be indications through the years, and you have to listen to your self and to other people.

If you are a very strong thinking type, analytical type, and someone comes into work and they are in tears, developing your people side, your feeling side, is not going to take an awful lot. It is just going to take the courage to be able to sit down with that person and say, "Tell me. What's the problem?" and just listen to them. Nevertheless, I have known leaders whom I respect who haven't been ready and have been terrified of situations like that. I can reverse it the other way equally. You have people who are very, very empathetic, very caring, who find it very difficult to have the courage to say to someone, "Your performance isn't up to scratch," which is equally necessary. I think that you have to look beyond the Myers-Briggs score and ask yourself, "Are you sure you've developed these areas?" and get some feedback from other people. I do think you can develop those weaker or less comfortable preferences.

If you have an extremely strong preference for one way, it may be more difficult for you to listen to opposites, and the message of your discomfort will be stronger. As long as you listen to it, the balloon will not hit you in the face. If you are repeatedly uncomfortable and you refuse to



acknowledge it, then that balloon is going to pop right up and hit you. A friend of mine said it is like the difference between being at home and visiting. We usually prefer home. When we are at home, we kick our shoes off and we relax. We know those preferences and we just enjoy them. However, when we go out and visit, we behave a bit differently. We visit other people or other places to get experience. We go out and we try different things. We try using other functions that are quite different from our natural preferences. It is quite tiring, so we come home and we rest and then we go out again, and gradually, we are expanding our home, or our self, if you may. That concept of visiting, I think, is a lovely concept. “Let me try this. I may not be very good at it, but let me just try to do it in a different way today.”

Larry: Let’s talk about Myers-Briggs in relation to servant-leadership. To begin, how useful is Myers-Briggs in relation to the themes of leadership and service?

Ralph: The first thing I would say is that at the basis of Katherine and Isabelle’s work was the idea of service, although it is not spelled out. Different types have different gifts to offer in service, but that is not explicit in their writings.

There has been an enormous amount of work done in applying typology to styles of prayer and in communicating with God, and various other religious aspects that may focus on an element of service, but it certainly would not be in the business context. I think the concept of service and typology is critical. There is a tendency to downplay the rational, artistic, and guardian aspects of types in service. But those other aspects are equally important. For example, a timely bus driver or train conductor, a smiling waiter in a restaurant, the chef who has prepared a delicious meal, musicians in an orchestra, a shopkeeper or a bank teller, a plumber and an electrician—each of these people provides an incredibly important service to others. Absolutely vital.

Service comes in all shapes and sizes. You can have practical service,



social service, theoretical service, and idealistic service. I think that many people who read Greenleaf are biased in Myers-Briggs types toward the idealist. Therefore, their concept of servant-leadership will also be idealistic—saving the planet, saving humankind, etc. All of these are equally important, and I think that any discussion on type and service really needs to emphasize that every single person, whatever their typology, has the potential to be a fantastic servant-leader according to their gifts.

Larry: That takes me precisely to the main point of my interest: What possibilities are there for further development around Myers-Briggs and servant-leadership? I am focused at the moment on how Myers-Briggs typologies can be an aid to servant-leaders of all types, and I'm also wondering if there are ways in which servant-leadership might somehow inform, or add to, the knowledge base of the utility of the Myers-Briggs type indicator. What do you see as the potential benefit and uses of MBTI, or even Jungian thought, in the ongoing development of servant-leaders and servant-leadership?

Ralph: I absolutely think that the Myers-Briggs contributes an enormous amount. I think that to direct the Myers-Briggs in terms of servant-leadership and how you use your gifts to fulfill Robert Greenleaf's Best Test is critical. Ask yourself, "What does this mean to you, and how can you help make certain that this is fulfilled?" The sensing-thinking type is about facts and analysis. They tend to be the very down-to-earth practical people, and they tend to like structure. For them, you see, structure is a service. Their servant-leadership is to set up structures, rules, and regulations. Structure is a gift because it enables other people to be treated fairly because the same rules apply to everyone. You know what the rules are, you have clarity, and you can be efficient in the way you go about doing things. Therefore, if you are efficient, that means that you have more time for yourself. You have a better work/life balance, for example, because the sensing-thinking types are the ones who come up with schedules, limits, and deadlines. Their servant-leadership is demonstrated in using their gifts of organization



and practicality to enable others to get a job done efficiently and well. Of course, society is better off for it. Servant-leadership gives each type a positive way to apply the gifts each one has to offer.

Larry: Could you give a corollary thought and an example then to the intuitive-feeling?

Ralph: Yes, and that is my own preference. Intuitive-feeling types, the idealistic types, at the extreme, and I am talking about the extreme, they regard structure as wrong. Everyone should be free to do what he or she wants to do. That is a little bit of an extreme point of view, but “Why do organizations exist?” I think it can lead to people sometimes disappearing in a cloud of idealism that has no relationship to the practical world. So, where would I see servant-leadership contributing? I think servant-leadership reminds those people, as it has reminded me, that we are united. We are a family in a broader sense of the word and that I can’t just “do my own thing” as an aging hippie. I have to direct those talents of mind in connecting with other people. It is that connection with other people that is the gift that I think servant-leadership brings to the intuitive-feeling type. So, I need to use that intuitive-feeling in helping the sensing-thinking person develop fun and spontaneity, but also recognizing that the sensing-thinking type has given me a sense of structure, which surprisingly enough actually I really do need in certain situations.

Larry: What is your Myers-Briggs type?

Ralph: I am (I)ntroverted-(I(N)tuitive-(F)eeling-(P)erceiving.

Larry: And I believe you know mine is (I)ntroverted-(S)ensing-(T)hinking-(J)udging.

Ralph: Indeed.

Larry: What about Sensing-Feeling types?



Ralph: Sensing-feeling types *tend* to be slightly impatient with theory, or they tend to be the great connectors, and those who appear to care most about others. The challenge of sensing-feeling types is that they can use those gifts for their own purposes. They are highly charming, and that can lead to a lot of manipulation. Again, in servant-leadership terms, when you get sensing-feeling types who are true servant-leaders, they just connect with people. They care about people and they will do just about anything to help people on a practical, everyday basis, and it is wonderful. I like to think of it as love in action, in servant-leadership, in all types of love in action, but this is an obvious one. It is the arm around the shoulder.

Larry: And Intuitive-Thinking types?

Ralph: Intuitive-thinking types are the opposite. They tend to be theoretical. So they would tend to be a bit more uncomfortable in dealing with people on a day-to-day level with warmth. Intuitive-thinking types tend to love dealing with ideas and concepts. The negative side can be that you may get into arguments about how many angels fit on the head of a pin. On the other hand, I am with John Dewey who said, “There is nothing as practical as a good idea.”

I think the great gift that intuitive-thinking types bring to servant-leadership is the idea to provide concepts, visions, and directions, to excite people with just a new idea that can transform their lives. Let me give you one example. In the United Kingdom where I live, local politics used to be about providing services. One of Mrs. Thatcher’s ministers reframed it, looked at it from a different way, and said, “It’s about the role of local politicians, local authorities. It should be about enabling people to have the services that they need.” Now, leaving aside the political things, that’s an enormous shift, and what he was basically saying is, “Let’s help people to develop their own capacity, their own services,” which in my mind is servant-leadership, but going about it in a different way. This is about respect and dignity, enabling you to provide for yourself what you need rather than



having someone tell you what you need and giving it to you as if you were incapable.

Larry: Let's talk about the introvert and extrovert in relationship to servant-leadership.

Ralph: I think it is very important to go back to Jung's original definition, which is what the Myers-Briggs typology uses as well. The key concepts from Jung are that the extroverts get their energy from the outer world, and they want to see things happen in the outer world. The introverts get their energy from the inner world and the inner world is their home. It really has little to do with whether you are shy or sociable, and ultimately in Jung's frame, that is a very important distinction to make. What you get from the extrovert is action. They work. Extroverts never sit by and watch things happen. They will want to jump in and maybe they will be involved with people if they are sensing-feeling. They may be involved with actual practical day-to-day stuff if they are sensitive-thinking. Again, it is service in action. It is obvious to see.

Larry: Do you then see extroverts as being more prone to action?

Ralph: Yes, I do. Immediate action anyway. On the other hand, introverts take things and work on them internally. You will not see immediate action. What you will get, ultimately, is something that is, if they are a thinking type, very clearly thought through, so they have done the work inside themselves and you get this tremendous clarity of thought, which is a service. Anything along the lines of what we can do in this world to help people think more clearly and deeply, I think is a great gift. Great gift. This is why, I think, in France, they teach philosophy in school—because they want people to think for themselves. In fact, I saw some extremely good work in the States where they were teaching philosophy in an inner school in New York City. These kids were being forced to think about things, and their views were being respected when they argued, and because



their views were being respected, they started respecting the teacher and it was a virtual cycle. It was an amazing work.

The introverted-feeling type will have an enormous capacity to care about people. Now that is not so easy to observe. Nevertheless, many of the great, well, and not so great, religious leaders have introverted feeling as one of their key functions. Their gift is to stand as the touchstones of morality and ethics. You may or may not agree with them. That doesn't matter, but they have such strong belief systems that I think what they do is provide an anchor, or to use another metaphor, a beacon. So when I work with people who are like this, I end up having enormous respect for their ethical and moral behavior. Even if I disagree with their ideas or their views, I think that service is to be an incredibly good role model to us. They will not do things that are outside their morality.

Larry: What are your thoughts on the differences between judging and perceiving?

Ralph: The great capacity that people with judging have is the capacity to plan, to organize, to structure, to get closure and completion on projects. The great gift in a servant-leadership capacity is that this capacity can be used wonderfully to help other people organize themselves, to develop growth and actually achieve a goal. I think that is fundamental. Nothing helps people so much as the feeling that they are helping to actually accomplish something. The person with the judging preference will push people, and that is actually a very positive function of the judging servant-leader. Sometimes they need to push people to accomplish what they are capable of doing and to take them through some of the obstacles that are in everybody's path, such as fear, etc.

The contrasting perceiving function is about spontaneity. It is about living in the moment. It's about fun and playfulness, not that judging types can't have fun, but it's also the capacity to be very flexible, to go off the message, quick wit, and playfulness. What you get from perceiving ser-



vant-leaders is very much the capacity to be with other people in the now—to be with them in a fully connected sense.

Larry: When you look at the issue of servant-leadership in relationship to the four pairings, are they roughly equal? That is to say, do you believe that any of those particular pairs have more relevance to being a servant-leader?

Ralph: Absolutely not. I think it's fair to say that you need different leaders for different situations. For example, in times of extreme growth or change, you may want a servant-leader who is conceptual, more of a visionary. Having said that, in times of extreme growth, you need all the types, actually. You absolutely need all the types in whatever situation, and that would be my categorical view. You see what happens is, if you think about leadership, what do we need to look at? We need a vision of where we are going to go. We need to be in touch with practical reality. We need to get stuff done. We need to look after our people on a day-to-day basis, but we also need some idealism, some inspiration, and the four core types represent those four aspects.

If you have too much inspiration from the intuitive-feeling type, there is no grounding in reality from the sensing-thinking and you are not likely to accomplish all that much. You can also have the most wonderful day-to-day practical understanding from the sensing-thinking type, but unless you have some vision you're not going to change and develop, and if you don't have people looking after everyday needs of people, then people are not going to be treated as people, as individuals, in their own rights, which the sensing-feeling types do beautifully. Sensing-feeling types remember to send the flowers when someone is ill, or remember to ask about a sick family member.

I'd like to put in a digression here, Larry. "Human resources," which is not a term I'm really in favor of, but it used to be that personnel departments were very much run by sensing-feeling types and they looked after people. What has happened with human resources is that you have the other types coming in, and more focus on tasks and on corporate objectives,



and less and less on the human dimension. I think there is no one looking after that “human” part of human resources in many organizations today. When you look at the best companies to work for in the States, and we have talked about the TDIndustries and Synovus and other organizations, then you see servant-leadership in all these aspects, and they have that vital component of the people connection. In fact, I remember reading about Southwest Airlines in the *Harvard Business Review*, and it said what differentiates Southwest Airlines from all the other airlines is that they invest in relationships.

Larry: I believe that an essential connecting point between servant-leadership and Myers-Briggs work has to do with the notion that everyone should be accepted for who they are, and that all too often in the role of supervisors we make the mistake of trying to change others into our own image. I have had some direct experience with this over the years, both as the recipient of mostly well-meaning supervisors and in my own well-meaning advice to staff. In recent years, I am no longer comfortable with the thought of my encouraging others to change, and this growing awareness has heightened my own sensitivity to those instances where others seek to change who I am. In fact, I am increasingly of the opinion that we are not only doing a disservice to others by not accepting them for exactly who they are now, but that we may even be doing harm to others, and to ourselves, through such practices. I believe that what passes today for standard management practices may someday be viewed as a kind of misuse of power toward others.

Ralph: I absolutely agree with that, Larry! I am not sure if Isabelle Myers said exactly those words, but she certainly would have approved totally, because that was the whole crux of her development. Jung was well known for just accepting people as they were. He had many faults, but one of his greatest strengths as a therapist was that he accepted people as they were. Paradoxically, once you accept people for who they are, they are then free to change.



Larry: That's right. It is a paradox. I think that we are near the center of what is for me an inquiry into how servant-leadership and Myers-Briggs and Jung's ideas can most usefully be connected. I am wondering if there is something here for servant-leaders that might be explored over time as a developmental tool, or as a piece of writing that would address the sixteen types in relation to servant-leadership.

Ralph: I think it would be of enormous use, Larry. I really do. I think it would be an extremely important piece of work to do. The core essence about both Myers-Briggs and servant-leadership is about helping people, acknowledging people as they are, and accepting them as they are. Greenleaf's best test about meeting people's highest priority needs could be applied in light of each type's gifts and preferences: "Are people healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?" Let me explain this.

I think that it would be exciting to do some work to help, whatever a person's type, to help them understand how they can use those gifts in the service of others in servant-leadership terms. I think that part of that is using positive affirming language so that you can help people to see how those gifts can be a blessing to other people. I take the example of the introverted sensing-thinking judging type and help them see how their ability to organize, to plan, to control, to work on details can be tremendously helpful to other people in terms of trust, reliability, and confidence in the fact that these people are getting things right and we can trust them to get things right in an everyday practical sense, whether it's accounting or engineering or cooking, or whatever. I think that is a tremendous area to be explored.

I think there is also a second part that is about serving people's highest priority needs. Well, my highest priority need, as someone who has an intuitive-feeling preference, will not be the same as yours, the sensing-thinking-judging preference. I need to be able to understand how, as a servant-leader, I could help meet *other* people's highest priority needs. Because, the worst thing I could do is say, "Well, *my* needs are for. . . ." Let



me give you a different example. Let us say I give you a book of poetry—metaphysical poetry even! That’s even better! You look at this and say, as has been said to me, “What planet is he on?” It does not appear that I am serving your highest priority need in the slightest. Now, there is a tension here. It is very clever of Robert Greenleaf and he is very mischievous, because the question becomes, what is the highest priority need? Perhaps what you need, let us say, is practical help. There is a slight tension in that I *do* need to help you that way, but *I* may need to help you expand your viewpoint just slightly. I come to your home bearing gifts, but I actually help you and encourage you to go out for a visit to somewhere else.

The more I read Greenleaf, the more I come to realize the total complexity of the challenge that he is sending us. I think Jung used a lot more obscure and mystical language, but ultimately, at the core, I think that there is a degree of overlap between Jung and Greenleaf. It is a lifelong challenge to serve other people, to serve ourselves, to develop, and to grow. The richness and the complexity of that are enormous, and I have to admit that it scares me.

As an intuitive-feeling-perceiving type, I just see so many possibilities, and my tendency would be to pull back because I have a feeling that I cannot possibly go into this. . . it is too much. Larry, as a servant-leader and as an ISTJ type, where you will help me enormously is in saying, “Look, let’s do some organizing. Let’s do some structuring and let’s think of putting some framework around it and containing it and working on it.” Because of your introversion, I know that it will be an in-depth framework. The idea of this interview is actually a lovely example of the gifts that each of us can bring to complement each other beautifully. Otherwise, I would not go a step further.

Larry: Do you have any thoughts on how the characteristics of servant-leadership might interact with the sixteen types, or vice versa?

Ralph: Let’s take listening and empathy. There is a lot of evidence, and I think that you can link it, but people with a preference for feeling tend to be



more empathetic than people with a preference for thinking. Feeling people are much more interested in the subjective world of others than thinking people. Thinking people tend to be more interested in objective reality. Thinking people would be more interested in other people's ideas or views about facts. So, they would say, "What do you think about the election?" Feeling people would be more likely to say, "Well, that's happened. What are your feelings about it? How is it affecting you personally?" Feeling people tend to bring it down to the personal. Thinking people tend to the more objective.

There's a very good and easy dimension of justice and mercy. Thinking people tend to prefer justice because there has been a crime committed. There's a penalty and it's only fair that anyone who has committed that crime gets the same penalty, the same punishment. Feeling people will go, "Yeah, but we have to look at the subjective side. Why did he do that?" so they tend to go more toward mercy. They are much more interested in exploring generally the inner motivations of other people.

I remember being incredibly impressed with Synovus's decision-making preferences. What does Synovus do? They start with the people in the decision-making. There is an enormous potential there, even on such things as, "How do we want an organization to be run?" Many people and organizations are constantly doing restructuring in their organizations. Here is a critical point. One of the findings from a long research project done in the U.K. is that organizations are the way they are because of the personalities of the leaders. There is a direct correlation with Myers-Briggs. Sensing-thinking types like clear structure. Why? Because they are efficient. Intuitive-thinking types love matrix organizations. It gives them freedom. Sensing-feeling types do not care about structure so much. What they care about is that people are looked after and valued; and intuitive-feeling types don't like too much structure, but what they love is individual growth and contribution.

Larry: It is interesting to think about what would happen if an organization made a point of having a core team of leaders drawn from each of those



four distinctions—to have a leadership team made up of four people, one from each of those categories. You could have a very remarkably well-informed leadership team that would be likely to bring much better perspectives than is normally the case. That may be a silly idea.

Ralph: No! It is not a silly idea! It is a very good idea. What I tend to do with teams and a board is to say that. Not the leader necessarily, but they have to have in their team, all the types to be good, and to use the expression “cover all the bases.”

Larry: How do you go about doing that, and what do you think about whether one should even attempt to find a way of doing that in advance of a hiring decision?

Ralph: You can ask questions and you can pick up information very quickly. When I was a business school lecturer, we had a team of 6-7 people who were all intuitives, and every time we made a hiring decision, we knew, because we talked about it, we knew we wanted a sensing person. And we made about three decisions over four years, and every time, we all said, “Well, it’s pretty obvious that that person has a sensing preference,” and we didn’t hire them. We always hired the people who were the same as us. It was appalling! It is very difficult to break that, but yes, it is very easy to do in ordinary conversation. Are they practical or are they theoretical? Are they task-oriented or are they people-oriented? Are they the organizer, or do they just kind of float around?

Larry: Ralph, thank you for this conversation. I’ve enjoyed it very much.

Ralph: And thank you, Larry, for your interest, and for all you do to encourage the understanding and practice of servant-leadership in so many ways.



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